

The Muslim Sunrise

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"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west" • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



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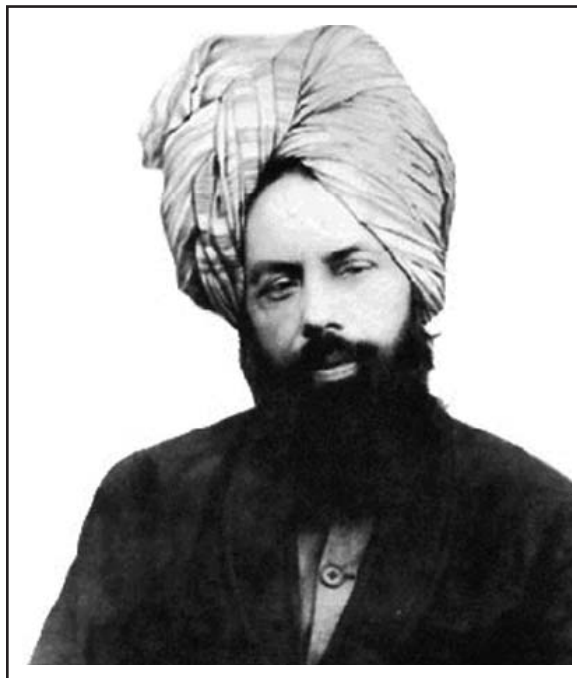
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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah.



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Shazia Sohail

Religion & Science Dept.

Dr. Zia H. Shah

Hasan Hakeem, Design/Layout

Muneeb Ahmad, Website

Mubashar A. Khan, Circulation

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allahu anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

*Muslims who believe in the Messiah,
Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani*



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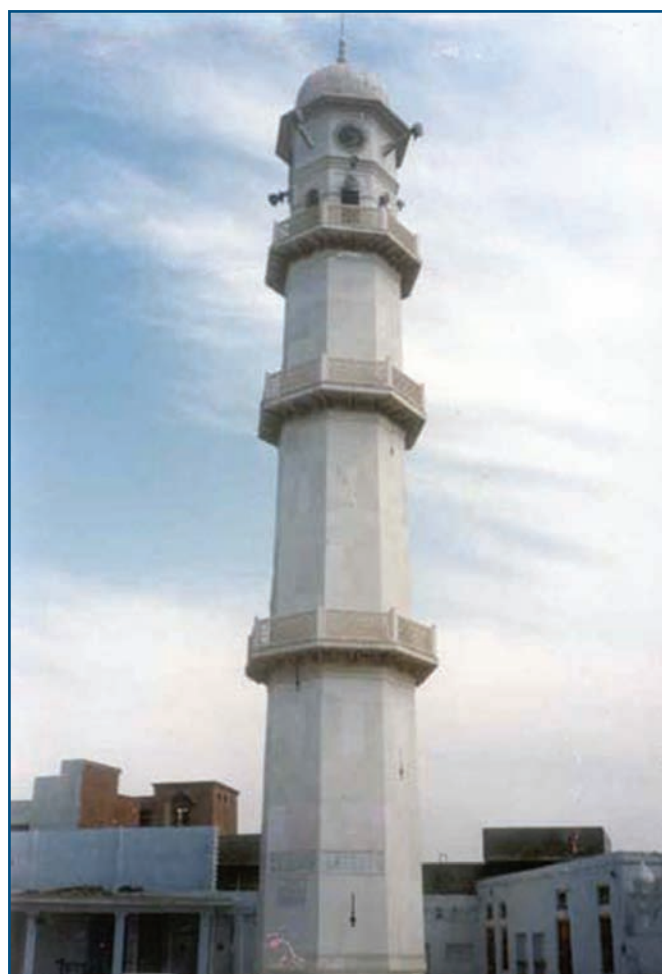
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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 17: Bani Isra'il

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِدُلُوكِ الشَّمْسِ إِلَى غَسَقِ
الَّيْلِ وَقُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ ۖ إِنَّ قُرْآنَ الْفَجْرِ
كَانَ مَشْهُودًا ﴿٧٩﴾

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ ۚ عَسَى
أَنْ يَبْعَثَكَ رَبُّكَ مَقَامًا مَّحْمُودًا ﴿٨٠﴾
وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَدْخِلْنِي مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ
وَأَخْرِجْنِي مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ وَاجْعَلْ
لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ سُلْطَانًا نَصِيرًا ﴿٨١﴾
وَقُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ ۚ إِنَّ
الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا ﴿٨٢﴾

[17:79] Observe Prayer at the declining and paling of the sun on to the darkness of the night, and the recitation of *the Qur'an* in Prayer at dawn. Verily, the recitation of *the Qur'an* at dawn is specially acceptable to God.

[17:80] And wake up for it (the Qur'an) in *the latter part* of the night as a supererogatory service for thee. It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to an exalted station.

[17:81] And say, 'O my Lord, make my entry a good entry and *then* make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power.'

[17:82] And say, 'Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away *fast*.'

In the Words of the Promised Messiah^{as}

How to Find Paradise in This Life?

It should be remembered that the highest spiritual condition of a person in this life is that he should find comfort in God and all his satisfaction, and ecstasy and delight should be centered in God.

This is the condition which is called the heavenly life. In this condition a person is bestowed the heavenly life in this very world in return for his perfect sincerity, purity and faithfulness. Other people look forward to paradise in the hereafter, but he enters it in this very life.

Arriving at this stage a person realizes that the worship that was prescribed for him is in truth the food that nurtures his soul, and on which his spiritual life largely depends, and that its consummation is not postponed to the afterlife. All the reproof that the reproofing self administers to him on his unclean life and yet fails to rouse fully his longing for virtue and to generate real disgust against his evil desires, and to bestow full power of adherence to virtue, is transformed by this urge which is the beginning of the development of the soul at rest.

On arriving at this stage a person becomes capable of achieving



The Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi

*“Alaysa-Allahu bi-kaafin ‘Abdahu”
Is not God sufficient for His servant?*

complete prosperity. All the passions of self begin to wither and a strengthening breeze begins to blow upon the soul so that the person concerned looks upon his previous weaknesses with remorse. At that time nature and habits experience a complete transformation and the person is drawn far away from his previous condition. He is washed and cleansed and God inscribes love of virtue upon his heart and casts out from it the impurity of vice with His Own Hand.

The forces of truth all enter the citadel of his heart and righteousness occupies all the battlements of his nature, and truth becomes victorious and falsehood lays down its arms and

is put to flight. The Hand of God is placed over his heart and he takes every step under the shade of God.

God Almighty has indicated all this in the following verses:

“These are they in whose hearts Allah has inscribed *true* faith and whom He has strengthened with inspiration from Himself.” (58:23)

“And has made it *look* beautiful to your hearts, and He has made disbelief, wickedness and disobedience hateful to you. Such indeed are those who follow the right course, through the grace and favor of Allah. And Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.” (49:8-9)

“Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away *fast*.” (17:82)

Meaning these are they in whose hearts Allah has inscribed faith with His Own Hand and whom He has helped with the Holy Spirit. Allah has endeared faith to you and has made it to seem fair to your hearts, and He has made you averse to disbelief, wickedness and disobedience and impressed upon your hearts the viciousness of evil ways. All this has come about through the grace and favor of Allah. Allah is All Knowing, Wise. Truth has arrived and falsehood has vanished, falsehood is bound to disappear. ♦

*(Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam,
Page 108-110, For full text of the book go
to Alislam.org)*

Editorial

Religions document their laws and guidance in their respective scriptures. These collectively represent a way of life. Their value systems generate a culture and establish the norms for society. These laws are designed to enrich the lives of believers and seek to raise man from the lowly level of animals, to the lofty realm of angels.

Animals are those creatures which are enslaved to their basic drives and desires; whereas angels are those beings which exclusively obey the Will of Allah. Man is caught somewhere in between; carving out the path towards his future – all the while determining which side he will incline towards.

When faith grows cold and humankind ignores the laws set forth by God, the earth experiences a kind of death. These abysmal times give rise to animalistic tendencies and the scriptures refer to such people as snakes, pigs, monkeys, etc. This represents their true spiritual character, although their outward form is that of humans. When such times of darkness are predicted, prophecies give hope to the people that God's mercy is to appear. This is likened to the winds giving glad tidings of the coming rains:

“And He it is Who sends the winds as glad tidings before His mercy, till, when they bear a heavy cloud, We drive it to a dead land, then We send down water therefrom, and We bring forth therewith fruits of every kind. In like manner do

We bring forth the dead that you may remember” (7:58).

God's mercy is kindled to raise a prophet at such a time to combat the darkness with light. God plants the words of His law as seeds in his fertile mind. These take root in his heart and God then breathes into him the spirit behind the law and the prophet attains “life.” The prophet given this spiritual birth becomes God's metaphoric son and is rightfully called the only begotten son of God.

God further strengthens the prophet's faith with the water of revelation and he submits completely to the Will of Allah. He bears the foliage and fruits of dreams, visions and understanding. The followers who gather around this strong tree are likened to spiritual birds who seek the spiritual shade and sustenance. They in turn, bear fruits of their own as they carry the message to others.

The Holy Qur'an allegorically tells us that Jesus took humble men, represented as clay, and shaped them into the form of birds with the laws of the Torah. Then he breathed into them the spirit behind the law and the birds came to life...a spiritual life. They then flew across the heavens, adorning it with their various colors and singing the praises of their Lord.

The same would be the case for the followers of the Promised Messiah^{as} who came as a manifestation of the second advent of Christ^{as}.

This issue describes the various spiritual fruits that resulted from establishing a relationship with God through His

chosen prophet – the Promised Messiah^{as}. Although all religions bore spiritual fruits while they remained in a state of purity, such fruits were given in abundance in Islam as it provided the pinnacle of spiritual development, nourished by the Holy Prophet Muhammad's light shining as the radiant sun. It was for this reason the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was given the title *Siraj-um-Munir*.

This spiritual light would not be extinguished after his death. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was followed by his eminent companions^{ra}, and the *Mujaddideen*^{rh} (Reformers) appearing at the head of every century thereafter, eventually culminating in the advent of the Promised Messiah^{as} in the fourteenth century.

In this way Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was spiritually likened to the sun, the Promised Messiah^{as} the moon, reflecting his light, and the *Mujaddideen*^{rh} to the twelve constellations of stars – representing the twelve centuries between the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as}. God ensured that when the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} passed away and spiritual darkness after the sunset would spread far and wide, his spiritual light would be preserved in the reflection of the full moon which appeared in the fourteenth century, just as the full moon is manifested on the 14th night of the lunar month. But until that time would come, the spiritual fruits of the Holy Prophet^{sa} would be tasted by the Reformers^{rh} and enjoyed by the Muslims of all time. -Naser-ud-Din Shams

Friday Sermon: Current Muslim Disarray and True Islamic Teachings

Summary of Friday Sermon
Delivered by Hadhrat Mirza
Masroor Ahmad ^{at}, Head of the
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community,
March 1, 2013

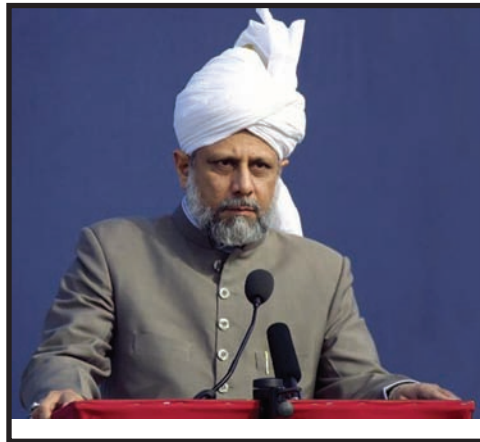
Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih began by reciting the Quranic verse as cited below:

‘And those who join what Allah has commanded to be joined, and fear their Lord, and dread the evil reckoning;’ (13:22).

The above verse does not only command to join connections, it also signifies that once joined, these connections should be fostered and maintained. A true believer who has been granted discernment of faith cannot even imagine doing something that would be contrary to God’s pleasure. Once he makes a connection with God and according to God’s commandment makes other connections, he adopts permanency in them.

It is the sign of intelligent and true believers that they **‘join what Allah has commanded to be joined’**. That is, they establish those connections which God has commanded to establish. In explanation of this verse Hadhrat Musleh Maud^{ra} has said that these are the people who, having attained excellence in their obedience and love of God, are drawn to God’s creation and in accordance with His commandments they forge connections of unity and benevolence with them.

These people try to attain excellence in obedience and love of God because they fear Him and fear evil reckoning.



In their hearts they possess Khashiyyat, fear of God. Lexicons explain the word Khashiyyat as fear of losing something which has lofty attributes after one has acquired an insight into its beauty and excellence. Once knowledge had been acquired about something that is feared and this fear is not borne of loss or harm, rather it stems from a belief that the thing is most excellent and great then one does not want to lose that thing due to one’s negligence. For a true believer such a thing can only be God and nothing else. As mentioned earlier, once a true believer has attained God’s nearness, he is drawn towards God’s creation and is mindful of Khashiyyat and fear of reckoning through incurring God’s displeasure and by not paying dues of creation. Indeed, this is how a true believer should feel. He cannot bear to incur God’s displeasure. In fact, even a person with little faith feels this way.

Yet, we see many people read the Holy Qur’an with translation and express their fear of God, they do not want to be among

those who incur God’s displeasure, yet they do not pay the dues of God’s creation. They do not try to join connections in the real sense and this contradiction can be seen among the majority of Muslims. We also cannot even say one hundred per cent about Ahmadis that they fully come under this definition of true believers.

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih said that he wished to speak on just one quality from among all the qualities of Muslims which are clearly explained by God. An important quality of Muslims that is stated is that they are **‘tender among themselves’** (48:30). God has cited this as a sign of true believers but the Ulema (religious leaders) and the rulers of Muslim countries have embarked on trampling this obligation in the name of Islam. And this is not happening in just any one Muslim country; in fact it is spread across almost the entire Muslim world, only differing in intensity from one place to another. This is because the personal gains of people have become more important and have assumed gravity over efforts to attain God’s pleasure. Observe the condition in Pakistan. Dozens are killed every day. If the killings of the past few years are added, the numbers reach in thousands and this is reported in newspapers. Apart from this each year hundreds or may be thousands are killed by suicide bombings and all this is happening in the name of God and faith. The Quranic verse citing **‘tender among themselves’**, likewise cites that Muslims are also **‘firm against**

non-believers’. The Ulema think they can make any one they wish a nonbeliever, a Kafir and thus carry out whatever they wish against them, as if they have been given a license to do what they want. Those who pass Fatwa (edict) of Kufr (non-belief) in these instances themselves come under Fatwa of Kufr according to God and His Messenger!

Pakistan is in a state of peace in the sense that no fighting between the public and the government is taking place there. In countries where such fighting is taking place and foreign powers have also committed cruelty, Muslims are killing Muslims. For example in Afghanistan Muslims are waging war against Muslims and in the last ten years in excess of 50,000 lives have been lost. These were mostly innocent Afghan people and only a small number of foreign troops and Afghan troops are included in the figure. In Syria where only Muslims are fighting each other, according to a cautious estimate 70,000 lives have been lost. Thousands were killed in Egypt in the name of revolution and in Libya too thousands were killed and continue to be killed. In Iraq from 2003 to date more than 600,000 people have been killed and suicide bombing continue even now. Reports are coming in now that some Muslim countries are involved in all this as instruments of wicked world powers. For example it was reported two days ago that a European country is supplying arms which Saudi Arabia is forwarding to the opposition fighters in Syria. These fighters have extremist elements in them and if they gain power, the public will be further repressed and the extremist elements will destroy world peace in the guise of their interpretation of: **‘firm**



Muslim countries need to understand their responsibilities. If only they were to put in practice the commandment of: ‘Surely all believers are brothers. So make peace between brothers, and fear Allah that mercy may be shown to you.’ (49:11)

against non-believers’.

The correct Islamic approach would have been for the organisation of Muslim countries to sit together without outside intervention and hold peace talks. Indeed, they could have done this. If the Alawis were persecuting others in Syria earlier, now the situation has been reserved. If there is a future world war it will start from the East and not the West as the earlier world wars. Muslim countries need to understand their responsibilities. If only they were to put in practice the commandment of: **‘Surely all believers are brothers. So make peace between brothers, and fear Allah that mercy may be shown to you.’ (49:11)**. The Muslims should have adopted fear of God, Taqwa, so that borne out of mutual compassion and sentiments of **‘tender among themselves’**, they would have attracted God’s compassion as well. Indeed, the

verse in which God commands Muslims to be **‘tender among themselves’** ends with **‘...Allah has promised, unto those of them who believe and do good works, forgiveness and a great reward.’ (48:30)**

The aforementioned situation of murder and mayhem is of those countries where either rebellion is taking place or there is a so-called war situation. ‘So-called’ because in order to assert their authority, some powerful countries have encamped in those lands on the pretext of maintaining regional peace but have created a war-like situation. Had the Muslims practiced **‘tender among themselves’**, even if fighting had broken between them, they would have practiced upon **‘make peace between brothers’** and outsiders would not have needed to nor dared to go to their countries.

In Muslim countries where there is apparent peace, there too Muslim is kill-

ing Muslim. If the government passes sentence on any leader, his sympathizers rise in revolt and start a murdering spree. What kind of Islam is this? Cruelty and barbarity is at its height in Muslim countries or Muslims are embroiled in it in the name of Islam. Whereas God has stated that the sign of a true believer is that due to his connection with God, his connection with creation is strong, especially Muslims are like brothers among themselves. It is most unfortunate that the more Islam draws attention towards good works and towards peace and conciliation, the worse the Muslims are becoming and more oppressors are being born among them. Muslims are deemed the source of trouble in Christian countries. In terms of ratio of population there are more Muslims in prisons. It was indeed for the reformation of this deteriorated state of Muslims that the advent of the Promised Messiah^{as} was to take place and took place. Yet, these people say they are not in any such need and their teaching is sufficient for them. If the teaching is sufficient, why have the Ulema formed different factions? And why are they hell-bent on tearing each other apart? Why do they not attain an insight into: **‘and fear their Lord, and dread the evil reckoning’** for themselves and also impart it to their followers? They have no fear of the Hereafter and they continue to deceive the public. These leaders forget the great message of the Holy Prophet^{sa} which is for the rest of time. They forget the message he left for his Ummah. By disregarding his message and by not giving it its due importance, most certainly they perpetrate ‘Toheen e Rasalat’ (blaspheme the Prophet).

In his Farewell Sermon, the Holy

In his Farewell Sermon, the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy, so has God made the lives, property and honour of every man sacred. To take any man’s life or his property, or attack his honor, is as unjust and wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory. O people! you will surely meet your Lord soon and He will ask you of your works. Do not become disbelievers once again after me lest you start killing each other.

Prophet^{sa} said: ‘Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy, so has God made the lives, property and honour of every man sacred. To take any man’s life or his property, or attack his honor, is as unjust and wrong as to violate

the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory. O people! you will surely meet your Lord soon and He will ask you of your works. Do not become disbelievers once again after me lest you start killing each other. What I have said to you, you should communicate to the ends of the earth. Maybe those who have not heard me may benefit by it more than those who have heard.’ After concluding his sermon, the Holy Prophet^{sa} asked three times if he had suitably conveyed God’s message. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^{ra} replied that the Prophet had indeed done so.

This was the message of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and a world apart is the practice of Muslims today. Are they not culpable of blaspheming the Holy Prophet^{sa} by not only not practicing his instructions but also trampling upon them? The Holy Prophet^{sa} also said that Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are safe. Are the Muslims today abiding by this? They have expelled Ahmadis from Islam. We say the Kalima and are servants of the Prophet^{sa} with sincerity of heart. How much persecution is being carried out on sects other than Ahmadis! Dozens were murdered in Quetta twice; people belonging to a sect that these people do not like. Shias are now becoming the target of the law that was promulgated against Ahmadis and in which everyone was involved. This cruelty will be perpetrated by each sect against each other once again. Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih explained that he said once again because that is how it has always been. It was only against the Ahmadis that they joined forces. However, once they get a taste of this killing and are aroused by it, then boundaries are exceeded and that is exactly what is going on.

Hadhrat Musleh Maud^{ra} has explained that the hadith ‘Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue other Muslims are safe’ is not only applicable to Muslims. In fact it means that every peaceful person should be safe from a Muslim’s hand and tongue. This is a Taqwa-based insight into this hadith and the Ulema today do not have such insight. Unless their self-serving interests are eliminated and they generate an element of sacrifice, no matter how elaborate their robes, they cannot be true believers. Recently a Maulvi sahib said in a statement that Ahmadis are a cancer. Ahmadis are not a cancer, in fact they playing the role of informing the world

about ourselves either. Whether we fulfil the requirements as stated in both the verses (13:22 & 49:11). Everyone should self-reflect and gauge their condition. We should be under no illusions about ourselves. Albeit our failings may be on a smaller scale but this is what leads to large-scale deterioration. We are most desirous of God’s forgiveness and blessings for ourselves but do not know how to forgive others. If we were to care for others with compassion many problems that come to the Qadha Board of the Jama’at would be solved. God states in the Holy Qur’an: ‘...**Let them forgive and forbear the offence. Do you not**

compassion to the fullest.

Next Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih related several Ahadith which further elucidated the subject-matter.

Anas bin Malik relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘Anyone who wants to have his provision expanded, his term of life prolonged and for people to speak well of him should maintain ties of kinship.’

Amr bin Shuaib relates through his father and grandfather **that** the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘He is not of us who does not have mercy on young children and does not recognize honor of the elderly.’

Abdullah bin Masood relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘All creatures are Allah’s family; and Allah loves most among His creation those who treat his family well and look after their needs.’

Abdullah bin Amr relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘The Gracious God will have mercy on those who are merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth, Allah in heavens will have mercy on you.’

Hadhrat Jabir^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘Allah will keep him in His protection and mercy and will grant him entry to Paradise who has these three qualities: He is compassionate to the weak, he loves his mother and father and treats his servants kindly

Hadhrat ‘Aishah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘**Allah is gentle and He loves gentleness, and He rewards for gentleness what He does not recompense for harshness; and He does not reward any other virtue like He rewards gentleness.**’

Hadhrat ‘Aishah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: ‘Whenever gentleness is added to something, it adorns

The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said in this regard: ‘Forgive the sins of people and pardon their excesses and wrongs. Do you not wish that God too forgives you and pardons your sins? And He is Most Forgiving, Merciful.’

of the true teachings of Islam and thus providing healing for humanity. Others ask why is there difference in our Islam and that of other Muslims and we tell them that our Islam is in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and of the Holy Qur’an, whereas the Islam of the Maulvis is self-crafted. May God open the eyes and hearts of Muslim Ummah and inform them of the real Islam which is today spreading in the world via the true and ardent devotee of the Holy Prophet^{sa}.

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih said we cannot give a hundred per cent guarantee

desire that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.’ (24:23) The Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) said in this regard: ‘Forgive the sins of people and pardon their excesses and wrongs. Do you not wish that God too forgives you and pardons your sins? And He is Most Forgiving, Merciful.’ There is no one who does not wish for God’s forgiveness. Each person who believes in God is ever desirous of having his sins pardoned. God states if this is what you want then adopt the attribute of forgiveness and develop and enhance

it and whenever it is withdrawn from something, it leaves it flawed.'

Ib e Masood relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: 'Shall I not tell you from whom Fire is kept away? It is kept away from everyone who is approachable to people, who is kind and is of an easy disposition.'

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih said: 'Here I wish to especially draw the attention of Jama'at office holders that each one of them should have such [as aforementioned in Ahadith] good attitude and compassionate sentiments; in particular the main Jama'at office-holders. Indeed, these should be the qualities of each Ahmadi, but Jama'at office-holders who are serving Jama'at should especially never get weary of any petitioner or any person who frequently comes to office or contacts office, and they should welcome them whole-heartedly. It should always be remembered that no worker of the Jama'at should, under any circumstances, forsake courtesy. Nowhere should a situation arise giving even the slightest of hint that courtesy has not been extended. Rather, effort should be made to facilitate as much help as possible and converse as gently as possible.'

Hadhrat Abu Huraira^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: 'Wealth does not diminish by giving alms. Allah exalts one who forgives others. There is no humiliation in forgiving other's fault.'

Hadhrat Anas^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: 'Do not have rancor for one another nor envy one another nor shun one another. Rather, live as servants of Allah and as brothers. It is not lawful for a Muslim to refuse to speak to his brother for more than three days and to

cut off ties with him.'

Hadhrat Abu Huraira^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: 'Do not envy one another; do not inflate prices to incur loss to another, do not bear rancor with one another, do not turn away from one another, do not undercut one another. Rather, be Allah's servants and brothers to each other. A Muslim does not oppress his brother nor does he hold contempt for him nor does he humiliate or disgrace him. Pointing to his breast, the Prophet said three times; Taqwa is here. It is evil enough for someone to look down with contempt at his Muslim brother. The life, property and honor of each Muslim are inviolable for every Muslim.'

Hadhrat Abu Huraira^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: 'Allah will say on the Day of Judgment: Where are those who loved one another for the sake of My glory and My greatness! Today when there is no shade but My shade, I shall give them shelter in My benevolent shade.'

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih prayed that may we increase our mutual love and compassion and become that community which the Promised Messiah^{as} wished to make, in light of the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. And may the Ahmadiyya Community also become the guarantor of world peace. May the Muslims accept the Promised Messiah^{as} and understand the significance of mutual love. May the Muslims leaders stop their oppression of the public and are fair and just towards them and rather than be an instrument in the hands of those with vested interests the public has sense. May God soon rid the world in general and the Muslims in particular of the hold the horrendous extremists have on Muslim countries so

that we are able to spread the beautiful teaching of Islam in the world in a better way and with greater proficiency. May God enable us to do so.

Next Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih announced that he would lead a funeral Prayer in absentia.

Nasira Saleema Raza sahiba of Zion, USA passed away on 18 February. She was an African-American Ahmadi. Born in 1927 to the family of a Baptist priest she did not take any interest in Christianity. She accepted Ahmadiyyat in 1949 and was married to late Nasir Ali Raza sahib in 1951. She served the Jama'at over a long period and was the regional Lajna sadr for many terms. She was very keen on Tabligh work and would distribute leaflets and arrange for books and copies of the Holy Qur'an to be placed in libraries. By virtue of her Tabligh efforts more than fifty people accepted Ahmadiyyat. She was a cheerful person and was very well-liked among the ladies who visited her in great numbers and looked up to her as a mother figure. She exuded love of Islam. She would coach young girls about purdah and other Islamic moral teachings and how to deal with bad customs of the West. She did Tabligh to her mother for several years until her mother accepted Ahmadiyyat at the age of 85 which delighted her. Nasira Saleema sahiba was a very efficient worker who had great love for Khilafat and the Jama'at. She had a mulaqat with Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih last year. May God elevate her station in Paradise. She leaves behind nine children and twenty one grandchildren. May they stay firm on piety and be the recipients of her prayers.◆

How to Develop Spirituality? Teachings of the Promised Messiah

Dr. Khaula Rehman

In the United States, there is a growing trend towards materialism. Research shows that recent generations are focusing more on money, image, and fame than ever before. A survey conducted by the University of California and the American Council on Education on a quarter of a million new college students found that their main reason for attending college was to gain material wealth. From the 1970s to the late 1990s, the percentage of students who stated that their main reason for going to college was to develop a meaningful life philosophy dropped from more than 80% to about 40%, while the purpose of obtaining financial gain rose from about 40% to more than 75%.

So majority of us are running behind gaining more money, more property, better cars and bigger houses. Women want to surpass each other with more expensive designer clothing and jewelry and with bigger diamond rings. Between 2005 and 2011 the market of diamond jewelry doubled. Worldwide diamond jewelry retail sales came to \$70.8 billion. Diamonds have inspired many a lover. Their imagined beauty and brilliance lend them a mystique that seduces the recipient's mind. Indeed, there is something magical about them. However, how much of this mystique is a marketing ruse is a hotly debated topic. Nevertheless, an interesting reality is that despite our obsession with jewelry and diamonds, most of us cannot tell a real diamond from a fake one and have to rely on experts to tell us about their charm and reality. How can something, which we do not even know is real or fake, bring us happiness and contentment? No wonder, material pursuits, as our ultimate goal, leave us empty

"And as to those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water until, when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing. And he finds Allah near him, Who then fully pays him his account; and Allah is swift at reckoning." (Al Qur'an 24:40)

and hollow in the final analysis. According to the Holy Qur'an:

"And as to those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water until, when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing. And he finds Allah near him, Who then fully pays him his account; and Allah is swift at reckoning." (Al Qur'an 24:40)

A mirage cannot quench our thirst. Many psychological studies have found that materialism is negatively related to happiness and it can cause many psychological issues such as depression, narcissism and even paranoia.

Concerning real prosperity Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Indeed, he truly prospers who purifies himself." (Al-Qur'an 100:9)

So true prosperity and happiness are found in God and in gaining spirituality. There is no harm in having worldly ambitions with proper limits, but we should not become slaves of material progress and forget our God who is the true Treasure.

The Promised Messiah, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} Qadiani, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community lays the greatest emphasis on our Creator, God Almighty and our interaction with Him. He said:

"How unfortunate, indeed, is the man who does not even know that he has a God with power over all things! Our Paradise, indeed, is our God, our highest enjoyment is in our God, for we have seen Him and all beauty is found in Him. This treasure is worth having, even if the cost is one's life: and this is a jewel which should be purchased even if obtainable only by sacrificing one's entire being. O, ye that are devoid, run to this spring, for it will slacken your thirst. It is this spring of life that shall save ye. What am I to do, and how am I to impress this glad tiding upon your mind, with what drum should I go, crying through the streets that this is your God, so that all should hear! And with what unguent am I to treat the people."¹

So, if we want to be truly happy, content and satisfied, we should restore our misplaced

love, in the correct direction, which is the direction of God and spirituality.

The Promised Messiah^{as} explains the love of God, in his book the “The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam,” in some detail. He says:

“Of the natural conditions of man is his search after an Exalted Being towards whom he has an inherent attraction. This is manifested by an infant from the moment of its birth. As soon as it is born, it displays a spiritual characteristic that it inclines towards its mother and is inspired by love of her. As its faculties are developed and its nature begins to display itself openly, this inherent quality is displayed more and more strongly. It finds no comfort anywhere except in the lap of its mother. If it is separated from her and finds itself at a distance from her, its life becomes bitter. Heaps of bounties fail to beguile it away from its mother in whom all its joy is concentrated. It feels no joy apart from her. What, then, is the nature of the attraction which an infant feels so strongly towards its mother? It is the attraction which the True Creator has implanted in the nature of man. The same attraction comes into play whenever a person feels love for another. It is a reflection of the attraction that is inherent in man’s nature towards God, as if he is in search of something that he misses, the name of which he has forgotten and which he seeks to find in one thing or another which he takes up from time to time.

A person’s love of wealth, offspring, wife or his attraction towards a musical voice, are all indications of his search for the True Beloved.”²

In addition to the material things, we are also enamored by our fellow humans. God is Transcendent, beyond time, place and matter, but, our fellow humans are present here and now. This creates a human vulnerability, because of our focus on what is immediately visible and present:

“They know only the outer aspect of the life of this world, and of the Hereafter they are utterly unmindful.” (Al Qur’an 30:8)

Once a companion, Maulvi Abdul Karim^{ra}, asked the Promised Messiah,^{as} “Is it possible that sometimes the Messiah

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to material goods
and less dependent
on fellow humans,
while remaining
concerned about
their needs from
us.*

himself may fall prey to show off, like others, as well?” The Messiah reversed the question and asked him, “Have you ever gone to a zoo?” Abdul Karim answered in affirmative. Then the Messiah said, “There are so many different animals in a zoo, lions, tigers and others. Can you imagine anyone thinking, ‘I should say long prayers, here in a zoo, to impress these animals!’ Not even the biggest flaunt can come up with such a strategy. Because, everyone knows that the

animals are not of our kind, so the issue of showing off simply does not arise. Display is only in front of our peers. How can the friends of God, who are devoted to Him, fully cognizant of His attributes, show off to humans? For them other humans are like the animals, in a zoo, as compared to the Omnipotent God.”³

As we progress in our spiritual journey and become increasingly aware of the limitless treasures of God and His attributes of Omnipotence, Grace and Mercy, we gradually become oblivious to material goods and less dependent on fellow humans, while remaining concerned about their needs from us.

The Promised Messiah^{as} says:

“Only if you had eyes to see, you will find that there is God and God alone, everything else being worthless, you can neither stretch out your arm nor fold it, except with His permission. A person spiritually dead will laugh at this; but it would be better for him if he died before indulging in this laughter.”⁴

We should make ourselves worthy of spirituality and relationship with God, as the Promised Messiah^{as} said:

“Create a thirst for this spring, and then, itself, the water will gush out. For this milk! cry like a child, so that it should well up in the breast. Begin to deserve mercy, so that you should be shown mercy. Show anxiety and deep concern, so that your minds should be set at rest. Cry out with pain, again and again, so that a hand should stretch itself and take hold of you.”⁵

I conclude with a prayer from the Holy Qur’an:

“Say, ‘My Prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the worlds’.” (Al-Qur’an 6:163) ♦

Endnotes

¹ Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Our Teachings, Islam International Publications LTD, 1990, page 12.

² Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Our Teachings, Islam International Publications LTD, 1990, page 118-120.

³ Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Malfoozat, volume IV/V. Pages 19-20.

⁴ Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Our Teachings, Islam International Publications LTD, 1990, page 13.

⁵ Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Our Teachings, Islam International Publications LTD, 1990, page 16.

The crisis of religion in the contemporary world is the seeming absence of God in our daily affairs. An April 1966 Time Magazine cover story entitled “Is God Dead?” may have set off a firestorm among clerics for questioning the relevancy of God in an increasingly secular world, yet most theologians have been unable to adequately address the question. Even those attempting to bridge the gap between the secular and religious, such as influential American philosopher and psychologist William James, have only further removed God from everyday life. In one of his many seminal publications, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James writes “There are two lives, the natural and the spiritual, and we must lose one before we can participate in the other.”¹ Although James’ arguments were seen as a victory for religiously minded people because of his defense of the validity of individual spiritual experience, his arguments create a dichotomy between the spiritual and everyday life. In a sense, this binary conception of religion only serves to separate God from humanity. At best, theologians have made God into an elusive and remote figure. At worst, God has been completely removed from the picture.

Although many contemporary thinkers have been unsuccessful in their attempts to understand the place of God in our lives, an

Distinctive Features of the Spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}

By Monsura A. Sirajee



examination of the life of the Holy Prophet^{sa} of Islam provides the answer. Far from removing God from humanity, what is distinctive about the spirituality of the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is that his life bore witness to the immanence of God even in the mundane aspects of our lives. The Qur’an describes the relationship between God and man as closer than man’s jugular vein (50:17). The dualities that exist between the natural and spiritual are merged in the figure of the Prophet^{sa}. Arguably, increasing God-consciousness is the task of all messengers of God, but what is distinctive about the spirituality of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is that his experiences are to be shared with everyone. In other words, what is singular about him is that while

he was a special figure, he was also eminently human and his example was intended to be accessible, an aspect the Qur’an describes as a mercy for all of mankind (21:108).

The distinctive merging between the natural and spiritual within the figure of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is most cogently embodied in the highly spiritual event known as *al Miraj*, or the Ascent. In the fifth year of his prophetic calling, the Holy Prophet^{sa} had a vision of the Angel Gabriel taking him to the heavens. There he met a number of earlier prophets in the seven levels of the heavens and eventually found himself in the presence of God. The Qur’an describes this incredible encounter in Surat An-Najm, which states, “Then the

Prophet drew near to Allah; then Allah leaned down towards him. So that he became, as it were, one chord to two bows, or closer still” (53: 9-10). This encounter at once represents the pinnacle of spiritual experience between Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and God and also shows that such a communion is very much a possibility for mankind.

Not surprisingly, this powerful event has captured the imagination of Muslims for over 1000 years. The Promised Messiah and founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian, has provided extensive commentary on this event, underscoring both its individual importance for the Holy Prophet^{sa} and its significance for mankind more broadly. In *Braheen-e Ahmadiyyah*, the Promised Messiah^{as} comments that there are three types of attaining nearness to the Divine: the relationship of servant and master, father and son, and a mirror-like reflection. The first two types are characterized by a striving for nearness; though, they fall short of the goal to some extent. The third type of nearness, however, resembles a person’s own reflection to such an extent that “all Divine attributes become reflected clearly in his being.”² The Promised Messiah^{as} writes that this third level of nearness, which the Qur’an describes as the closeness between two sides of a bow and represents the highest form of spiritual eminence, was achieved by Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. In ascending toward God, the Prophet^{sa} fulfilled the ultimate goals of human creation—to arrive at an understanding of God and to reflect divine qualities in this realm.

The Holy Prophet’s^{sa} spiritual ascension in the event of *al-Miraj* represents not just a fleeting moment of nearness, but an ongoing close relationship between God and man. In another verse of the Holy Qur’an, which was revealed in another critical moment in the life of Prophet Muhammad,^{sa} this reflective relationship is once again mentioned when God states, “Those who swear allegiance to thee swear allegiance to Allah; Allah’s Hand is above their hands” (48:11). The reference is to the oath taken by Muslims at the hands of the Holy Prophet^{sa} at Hudaibiyah. The Promised Messiah^{as} writes that in this verse, God metaphorically refers to the Holy Prophet^{sa} as Himself and describes the Prophet’s hand as His Own Hand. This expression has been used concerning the Holy Prophet^{sa} because of his extreme closeness to God.³

Although some contend that such closeness between man and God does not befit

A great weakness of man is that he creates barriers between himself and God, while God declares in the Qur’an “O Muhammad, when my servants ask you tell them that I am near.” (2:187)

the dignity of God, the Promised Messiah^{as} has refuted such objections. In *Braheen-e Ahmadiyyah*, he writes, since God Himself has bestowed upon man a desire to acquire a true understanding of God, refusing man the ability to do so is tantamount to “afflicting man with hunger but not bestowing upon him bread to satisfy his hunger.”⁴ In fact, he further states that the definition of sin is estrangement from God, but can be avoided by establishing a relationship with Him.⁵ Rather than being an affront to God’s dignity, it is in man’s best interest to establish closeness with his Maker. A great weakness of man is that he creates barriers between himself and God, while God declares in the Qur’an “O Muhammad, when my servants ask you tell them that I am near”, (2:187).

Recognition that no such barriers exist between God and man has implications beyond one’s relationship with God. As the natural is part and parcel of the spiritual, our every interaction, including our interaction with our fellow human beings, contributes to our spiritual condition. Indeed, what is distinctive about the Holy Prophet’s^{sa} ascent to God in the event of *al-Miraj* is that it comes about, due to the Prophet’s closeness to humanity. In other words, the Holy Prophet’s^{sa} compassion for God’s earthly creation is what allowed him to spiritually ascend to the Creator. In this regard, the Promised Messiah^{as} writes that in ascending, between the Prophet and God “there was left no veil, and then he descended towards mankind and between him and mankind there was no veil.”⁶ In a sense,

God reveals that the degree of one’s spiritual development is a reflection of how well one conducts oneself in relation to one’s fellow human beings. Through this experience, we learn that the natural and spiritual dimensions always exist side by side. Even in the sublime moments of utmost spiritual experience, the concern for mankind never disappears.

Although it is scarcely possible to overestimate the importance of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} in Muslim religious life, this reverence has always been couched within a broader conversation about the *tawhid*, or Oneness of God. Despite the Prophet’s exceptional status, again and again, God instructs Prophet Muhammad^{sa} in the Qur’an to remind his followers that the Prophet is “a man like yourselves” (18:111). This is not only to correct the possibility of making God’s messenger into the Divine as we see in the Christian tradition, but to also remind Muslims that the Prophet’s humanness is a God-given blessing itself. In the Holy Prophet^{sa}, the Qur’an states, the believers will find “an excellent exemplar” (33:22). For this reason, the Prophet’s distinctive spirituality is intimately connected with the spirituality of all Muslims. Throughout his ministry, the Promised Messiah^{as} emphatically maintained that spiritual life is obtained only through following Prophet Muhammad.^{sa7} In this way, the spirituality of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} remains a living force. “Even in this age,” the Promised Messiah^{as} writes, “a person who obeys the Holy Prophet^{sa} is raised from the dead and is bestowed a spiritual life... By obeying the Holy Prophet^{sa} we experience those signs ourselves and through the blessings of observation and experience we arrive at complete certainty.”⁸ In a sense, the experience of *al-Miraj* or any event in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} is not just an account of the time of his life, but a description of our spiritual and earthly reality even now. ♦

Endnotes

¹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. New York: Penguin Group, 1982, 166.

² Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *The Essence of Islam: Extracts from the writings of the Promised Messiah*. London: Islam Ahmadiyya Centenary Publications, 1978, 167.

³ Ahmad, 244.

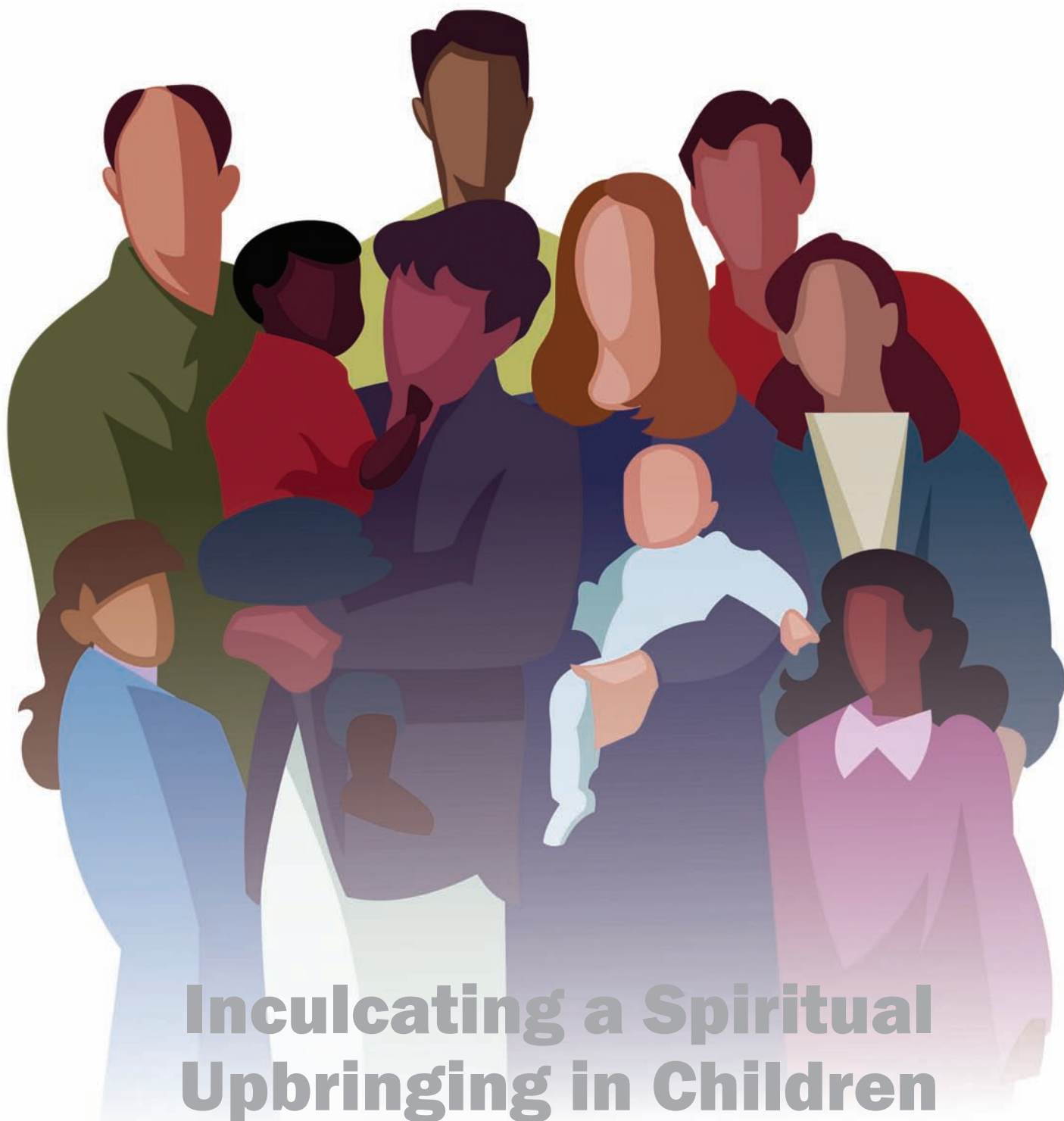
⁴ Ahmad, 106.

⁵ Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Four Questions by Mr. Sirajuddin, a Christian, and their Answers*. Islam International Publications Limited: Tilford, Surrey, 2009, 5.

⁶ Ahmad, 167.

⁷ Ahmad, 143.

⁸ Ahmad, 150.



Inculcating a Spiritual Upbringing in Children

‘And when he was old enough to work with him, he said, ‘O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering thee. So consider, what thou thinkest of it!’ He replied, ‘O my father, do as thou art commanded; thou wilt find me, if Allah please, of those who are patient.’

(37:103)

By Seher Chowdhry

The verse quoted is speaking of Prophet Abraham^{as} when he related to his son the dream he had about slaughtering him. The son responded readily and was prepared to face whatever God desired. This demonstrates the careful upbringing his parents had provided, resulting in their son becoming an excellent model of patience and resolve, as well as the preparedness of doing whatever it takes for the pleasure of God. This is an example of a child with a spiritual upbringing, whose mother and father trained him to be aware of the purpose of his existence and how to utilize it in ways that will be spiritually productive and beneficial.

Of course, one could argue that this incident happened centuries ago and in another era. Society was different then, the world wasn't as advanced as it is now where you can see the person you're talking to halfway across the globe. We are overtaken by many distractions of the 21st century. Therefore it begs the question of whether our children have a chance of learning spirituality?

Author Maureen Healy talks in her article "Spirituality and Children," of a research study carried out in New Delhi by the University of British Columbia. Mark Holder who was leading the research, interviewed a mix of children from different ethnicities and religious beliefs, and discovered not only that children believed in a 'higher power' but were also happier as a result, proving that there is a reason to cultivate and nurture a spiritual growth in your child, and the way to do that, is by example. It's a proven fact that children are influenced by adults, as they are constantly watching and observing, therefore we become their role models. But while we cannot always control what they do or don't see, we can make it a goal to ensure that what they see in us is a display of nothing but good morals. In this way we are training them to conduct themselves appropriately and accordingly in order to developing good practices that they can live by. By using



this window of opportunity in the early stage of their life it is easy to secure their good habits for the future. What parents sometimes take for granted are the small things, but it's the smallest things that can create great consequences later on, like lying for example. Lying is a habit that starts you on the road to many problems, ultimately leading you to evil. Lying for the sake of joking has the same result. Create an ideology in your environment for the love of truth and hatred of dishonesty. Prophet Muhammad^{sa} was so truthful he was nicknamed 'the truthful one.' This allowed people to trust him and when they trusted him, they respected him; when they respected him they loved him and when they loved him they protected him. His good habit paved the way for many of his other good habits that we try to follow today. It is adopting such practices that one realizes they don't need the luxuries the world has to offer, and for a child to accept this reality early on will help secure them on their spiritual path. So is it really necessary to upgrade that iPhone or buy that new car? Settling for less is nothing

to be ashamed of, and neither does it lower your status, the only status you need to be worried about is righteousness, achieved through love of God.

Just as children like to imitate others, they're also looking for someone to please, someone to give recognition for what they do. This is where you can turn their focus towards God, and instill their love for Him so that they develop 'taqwa.' *Taqwa* translates to 'fear of Allah,' the kind of fear when one seeks to please God so much that you can't stand to see any disappointment from Him caused by you. A child can learn to love God with the right guidance, which in turn will allow their spirituality to bloom. It is also important to remember to teach with love and respect. Some feel it necessary to use strict measures to educate their young. While this may be effective for a short time, it does not guarantee good results in the long run. The Taliban bully everyone into doing what they view as religiously necessary, regardless of whatever faith they belong to. They have taken on this extreme thinking they are doing their God-given duty, when really they're abusing the sanctity of their own religion. An environment that only involves strictness will result in the child rebelling against you, it will damage the respect they have for you and will ultimately backfire. The same case applies if there was too much leniency, as Prophet Muhammad^{sa} once said: "In every matter moderation is best." It is best to keep in moderation in all things you do.

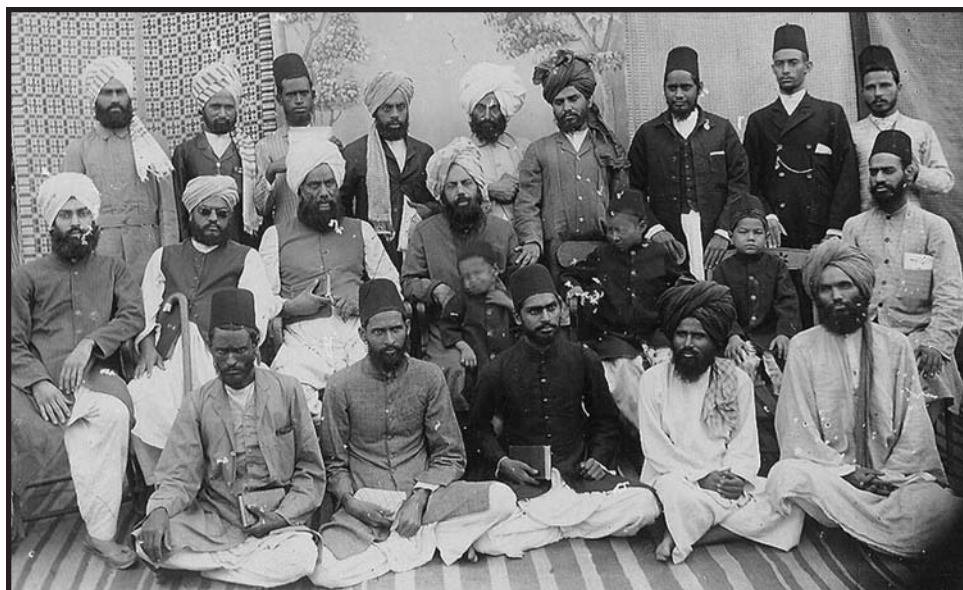
The materialistic ideologies of this world are merely temporary. They are not going to provide your children with the true happiness that will make them appreciate their existence. As parents you want to guarantee them an enlightened transition into adulthood, and the most powerful tool at your disposal will be prayer. It is said that God eagerly listens to the prayers of children, so get them into the habit of constantly praying, always relying on God for whatever their needs are. With these things in mind instilling spirituality in your children won't be as difficult as you think, not with the help of God. ♦

Some Spiritual Experiences of the Promised Messiah's Companions

By Andleeb Shams Ahmed

The beauty and truth of Ahmadiyyat does not rely solely on the claims of the Promised Messiah^{as}, but also lies in the spiritual experiences of his companions. These experiences are what solidified their devotion to the Promised Messiah^{as}, and hence to the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad^{sa}. Some of these companions were staunch enemies of the Promised Messiah^{as}, who then saw the light of the truth in him and became his devoted disciples. Some were faithful followers from the beginning, yet experienced dreams or events that only strengthened and bonded their affirmation in knowing that he was truly the divine Reformer of Islam. These are just a few mere examples of those experiences.

This story was conveyed by Ghulam Hussain Bhatti^{ra}, a companion of the Promised Messiah^{as}. He had a righteous and pious friend, named Lal Din. Lal Din once saw a dream where he was in the presence of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, and Lal Din duly offers his greetings of salaam. The Holy Prophet^{sa} is seated at a chair and returns the greeting and calls for Lal Din to come closer. Sitting besides him to his right is a man. The Holy



Prophet^{sa} asks Lal Din, "Have you recognized this person? He is the Reformer (Mahdi). Recognize him." Lal Din replies that he has recognized him. When he looks at the Reformer, he sees rays of light emanating from his face. This dream was so powerful for Lal Din that he felt inclined to God. Soon after, Ghulam Hussain^{ra}, Lal Din, and a couple of other people head out to Qadian, where the Promised Messiah^{as} resided and founded Ahmadiyyat, to take the initiation for Ahmadiyyat (Bai'at) in the hands of the Promised Messiah^{as}. While on route to Qadian, Lal Din saw another dream, which he communicated to his companions. The dream showed the Promised Messiah^{as} asking him, "What was the point of bringing along a donkey?" In interpreting this dream, Lal Din persevered in asking his group that if anyone had ulterior motives, obviously hypocritical motives, to be going to Qadian, then they should announce it accordingly. One of the men professed that he had no intention of taking the initiation and was only on the trip to ensure that Lal Din did not stay on in Qadian. As they arrived in Qadian, it was the lunch hour, and they were promptly invited in to come and eat. A man had asked them what was their reason for coming to Qadian and what motivation brought them there. Lal Din related his dream to him. This man then asked Lal Din if he would be able to recognize the Promised Messiah^{as} if he saw him without being introduced. Lal Din was sure he could do so. As there were other men coming into

the mosque, the host began to question Lal Din if any of these men were the Promised Messiah^{as}. Each time, Lal Din replied no. A side window of the mosque was opened and the Promised Messiah^{as} looked in to the mosque. Immediately, Lal Din recognized him as the true Reformer, adding that he also saw the same rays of light emanating from his face that he saw in his dream.¹

Sometimes his followers had dreams that just solidified their affirmation in believing in him and that he truly was the Reformer of Muhammad^{sa}. Dr. Abdul Majeed Khan tells his dream that he had a few years after the Promised Messiah^{as} passed away. This dream showed him the truthfulness of the Promised Messiah^{as} being the Reformer. The dreamed showed the Holy Prophet^{sa}, the Promised Messiah^{as}, and Hadhrat Umar^{ra} (the second Caliph of Islam) all in his house and are very happy. Dr. Khan is introduced to all of them by the Promised Messiah^{as}. Dr. Khan relates that he found much resemblance and similarities in the appearances of the Holy Prophet^{sa} and the Promised Messiah^{as}. The current Caliph of Ahmadiyyat today, Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, has explained that his dream is proof that the Promised Messiah^{as} is a shadow or reflection of the Prophet^{sa}.²

Some of the spiritual experiences had nothing to do with dreams, but with just simply meeting the Promised Messiah^{as} and having a feeling of his truth. There was a very influential scholar named Maulvi Gh-

ulam Nabi, who had an impressive following of Muslims, who appreciated his knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Holy Prophet^{sa} (Hadith). When the Promised Messiah^{as} was residing in Ludhiana, India, Maulvi Nabi used to bring large congregations of his followers outside the home/mosque of the Promised Messiah^{as} to protest the claims of him being the Reformer and actually spewing hatred and obscenities toward him. One day as the Promised Messiah^{as} was entering the mosque, Maulvi Nabi caught a glimpse of his face and something immediately empowered him with love and devotion towards him. Just by glancing at his radiant face, his hateful speeches and evil arousing of enemies changed dramatically. After seeing him, he ran towards him and was amazed by the fact that the Promised Messiah^{as}, who has been the subject of his obscenities and hateful speech, reached out his hand and offered the greetings of peace. Maulvi Nabi sat with him and naturally asked many pertinent questions regarding his claim about the death of Jesus^{as} and his own claim to be the reformer. As the Promised Messiah^{as} spoke, Maulvi Nabi was so enamored with him that he immediately proclaimed his love and devotion to him and took the oath of initiation at his hands and became one of his most devoted companions.³

Some spiritual experiences had nothing to do with dreams, but instead were divine miracles that happened from the teachings of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Prayers were of the utmost importance to the Holy Prophet^{sa} as well as the Promised Messiah^{as}. His followers knew how highly he encouraged all to seek help and answers from God through prayers. He taught his followers that God is always with them and safeguards them, and he said himself that these gifts of prayer have come from his master, The Holy Prophet^{sa}. One of his revelations said, "Every grace comes from the Holy Prophet^{sa}. Blessed, therefore, is he who taught and he who learnt."

Babu Abdur Rehman^{ra} story is nothing short of the miracle of prayer, as well as evidence of the wondrous example of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Babu Abdur Rehman^{ra} travelled to Qadian with Chaudhry Rustum

***The Promised Messiah^{as}
made a great claim—one
of the greatest in history.
Those who accepted
Ahmadiyyat during his time
were blessed with receiving
divine signs, historically,
religiously, and personally,
signaling his truth and
divine claim to be the
Reformer of Islam for all.***

Ali^{ra} to perform the initiation at the hands of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Upon returning home, he fell quite ill for several days with an extremely high temperature. Chaudhry Ali^{ra} wrote letters to the Promised Messiah^{as} requesting prayers. One afternoon, he saw a vision with his deceased sister telling him that his prayer has been accepted. After this, Babu Rehman^{ra} fell unconscious and was like this for several days. His family gave up all hope of his chances for survival. Rustum Ali^{ra} ardently prayed for his recovery. Not only for his family and his own sake, but especially since he had fallen ill so soon after taking the initiation. He feared that family, friends, and new converts to Ahmadiyyat would have a bad impression that he fell so gravely ill so soon after taking the initiation. Almost immediately, Babu Rehman^{ra}'s health had improved and within one month, he had fully recovered. This miracle was prime example for how the Promised Messiah^{as} urged his companions and followers to believe in the power of prayer. It reinforced and strengthened one's faith and has become an inspiration for all members, past and present.⁴

Several companions took the initiation without ever even seeing or meeting the Promised Messiah^{as}. There are countless examples of this, but this account is similar to so many. Hadhrat Jan Muhammad^{ra} actually took the initiation in 1892 after many prayers. He performed a formal prayer asking for guidance (Istakhara) before accepting

him as the Reformer. He saw several dreams supporting his claim to being the Reformer. One important dream he saw showed the actual person who was destined to be the holy guide of the time. Not recognizing the face, Jan Muhammad^{ra} was confused and couldn't fully comprehend the dream. About seven or eight years later, he took the initiation again at the hands of the Promised Messiah^{as}. (Since many people did not live in the same area as the Promised Messiah^{as}, they took the initiation by paper, but always aspired to do so at his own hands.) When he met the Promised Messiah^{as}, he finally realized that the holy person in his dream was actually he. Therefore, cementing the truth that he was truly the Reformer sent by God.⁵

There are countless examples of spiritual experiences by the companions of the Promised Messiah^{as}—too many to list. However, the relevance of these experiences is what is most impressive. The Promised Messiah^{as} made a great claim—one of the greatest in history. Those who accepted Ahmadiyyat during his time were blessed with receiving divine signs, historically, religiously, and personally, signaling his truth and divine claim to be the Reformer of Islam for all. These are living testimonies and powerful statements to the attestation of the Promised Messiah^{as}, and therefore to the Holy Prophet^{sa} of Islam. And many so blindly accepted him and his message, knowing in their heart that he was the chosen one. Whether it was divine dreams or just the aura around the Promised Messiah^{as}, these experiences changed people's lives forever and helped make the true message of God spread throughout the world today. May God continue to enlighten people's hearts and show them His true message through the Ahmadiyya Community in Islam. ♦

Endnotes

¹ Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, Friday Sermon, 11 January 2013.

² Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, Friday Sermon, 11 January 2013.

³ Report by Sheikh Abdur-Rahman, Ansarullah Magazine, October 1995.

⁴ Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, Friday Sermon, 15 June 2012.

⁵ Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V, Friday Sermon, 11 January 2013.

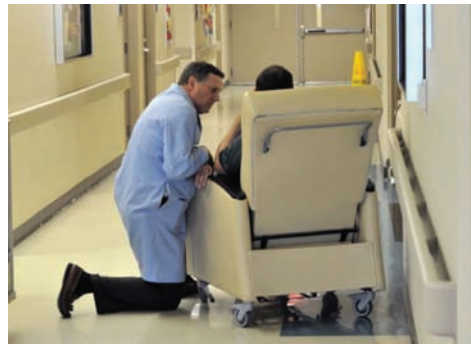
Spirituality and Spiritual Care

By Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.

A few months ago I received a call from El Camino Hospital, a local hospital in Silicon Valley, California, in the town of Mountain View. The Chaplain of its Spiritual Care Service, the Reverend Maryellen Garnier, asked me if I would like to work as a Spiritual Care volunteer for Muslim patients! I did not have any ‘professional’ experience or formal training to work in a hospital environment, but the impulse to take care of the suffering and the ill made me respond in an enthusiastic affirmative to her invitation. After I visited the hospital and talked with the Chaplain, I was given the details of the Spiritual Care services. I learned that in addition to the medical help that the patients do receive from physicians, nurses and hospital staff, spiritual support is also provided to them through volunteers and the Chaplain for their emotional and spiritual needs.

I was told by the Chaplain that spirituality was an openness to the possibility that the soul within each of us is somehow related to the soul of all that exists. Spiritual care is, therefore, offered to the patients to nurture their human spirit in coping with the illness, pain and suffering they are passing through. I was impressed by the fact that there was a large group of volunteers belonging to diverse cultures and faith communities – such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and others — who made regular visits to hospital units, meeting with patients and their families belonging to their particular faith traditions. The volunteers are formally trained in Spiritual Care Service in a hospital environment. They are taught how to deal with the religious, spiritual and ethical concerns of patients and their families. The volunteers are to respect personal beliefs and religious affiliation of each individual patient, and offer unconditional support by providing appropriate “encouragement, comfort and hope.” Even those patients who may not belong to any organized religion, or may not believe in God, they also have spiritual needs; they want to know that their life has meaning. They feel loved, and they love others. They may be asked what does illness mean to them! The Spiritual Care volunteers help the patients passing through a stressful phase of their lives, and at times they provide emotional support to their family members as well who may be

Offering emotional support and spiritual care by helping people connect with their own inner and community resources.



grief-stricken! They also communicate with the physicians and the staff of hospital on sensitive matters related to specific religious, cultural and spiritual needs of the patients to help nurture a better healing environment.

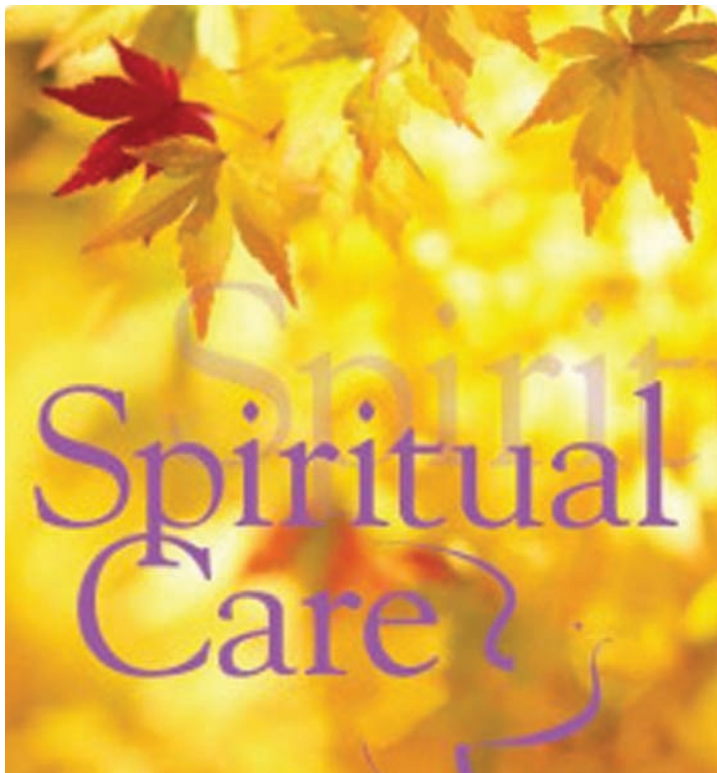
The Spiritual Care volunteers and the Chaplain are not there to advise the patients on legal issues. The volunteers are not there to solve patient’s physical health problems, and they do not get involved in physical care. Moreover, they are not supposed to preach or proselytize the patients. They cannot promote their own personal beliefs when trying to offer spiritual support and may not attempt to ‘save’ their souls by offering ‘redemption.’ They may read appropriate sacred texts to them only when mutually agreed upon by the patient and/or family. They offer prayers only when requested. Similarly, all other precautions are taken to avoid any infringement of cultural and religious sensitivities. For example, in some cultures a male cannot have physical contact with a female or shake hands with her. And surely the volunteers are not there to burden the patients with their own personal problems or emotional needs. At times, instead of benefiting a patient, personal disclosures can have undesirable negative effects. Therefore, they do not share with the

patients their own health experiences either.

In addition to having Spiritual Care volunteers and religious ministers available, some hospitals also have meditation rooms with spiritual scriptures at hand. The patients or the visitors can go in the quiet meditation room to spend time in praying, reflecting, meditating or reading the sacred scriptures in privacy. Copies of various sacred texts, such as the Torah, the Bible, the Bhagavat Geeta, Book of Mormon, Bahai Prayers and the Qur’an are provided in the meditation room all the time. For Muslims, prayer rugs are available with the *Qiblah* direction shown on wall. To demonstrate equal respect for all faith traditions, and not to give preference to any particular type or religious denomination over the other, no religious symbols such as the Cross, the Star of David, the Crescent, Yin Yang or Dharmachakra, etc. are placed in the meditation room.

While visiting the patients, the Spiritual Care Service volunteers listen to their stories carefully trying to recognize their specific spiritual needs that might be helpful in the healing process during their hospitalization. Personal religious beliefs of a patient are considered as an integral part of their healing process, and they need to be listened to with openness without any preconceived ideas. It also helps if a Spiritual Care volunteer is able to assess a patient’s relationship with God and his or her personal faith experience. If the patient is able to express his or her sense of purpose in life, it becomes easy to assess what is the meaning of pain and suffering in life. The volunteers reach out to patients trying to build a trusting relationship with them. They try to bring emotional and spiritual stability by facilitating clear, honest and timely communication. The Spiritual Care Service helps the patients to connect with their personal resources of inner strength of faith as well as the outer support of their friends, family, faith community and spiritual leaders. Thus, the patients are made to feel uplifted by recognizing the uniqueness of their personal spiritual values; and these positive feelings help empower them to bear the pain and suffering with dignity and poise. Important thing is that the patient feels the sense of being loved and cared for, and gets hope for recovery.

I found it very interesting that the Spiritual Care Service has taken time to collect prayers and teachings of various faith traditions and has printed them in small booklets with beautiful colored cover pages. These include prayers and spiritual teachings on Hindu,



The Spiritual Care service helps the dying persons by encouraging the presence of those who love them and whom they want to be near. Feeling of love and being loved is the most precious gift for a departing soul.

Buddhist, and Christian faiths. Flyers are also printed with Muslim supplications (*Du'a*). The Hindu booklet has a beautiful picture of lotus flower which is widely used among Hindus as a symbol of life, fertility, ever-renewing youth and beauty. The booklet has teachings and prayers taken from the Vedas and Bhagavat Geeta. Similarly, the Buddhist booklet also has a lotus flower on the cover. As 'detachment' from the material world is emphasized in Buddhism, the lotus flower represents that detachment – i.e. an empty mind detached from all worldly affairs. The booklet contains Buddhist prayers for healing, and also some spiritual instruction on coping during difficult times. The Christian booklet has the Easter lily on the cover page to commemorate Jesus Christ^{as}'s resurrection, and symbolically it offers hope for everlasting life. It has some Psalms and prayers from the Gospels including the Lord's Prayer.

As there was no booklet on Islamic prayers and teachings, I worked with the Chaplain, the Reverend Maryellen Garnier, and we produced a booklet that contained Qur'anic prayers and some prayers of Prophet Muhammad^{sa} for the sick and the suffering. The booklet starts with *Surah Al-Fatihah*, the opening chapter of the Qur'an, which is also called *Al-Shafa – the Cure*. It also includes several verses from the Qur'an concerning approaching the end of this worldly life. Towards the end, the last three *Surahs* of the

Qur'an are included. On the front cover of the booklet is picture of a beautiful red rose. As the rose essence lifts up the spirit and is wholesome for the heart and other vital parts of body, it is a symbolic expression of remedies for the ailments of body, mind and soul.

For some of the patients who are hospitalized, it becomes extremely difficult to deal with their pain and illness. Especially if there is a prospect of prolonged suffering, disability or impending death, the patients and their family members are under great stress and need emotional support and spiritual help. At times, the patients may experience helplessness, anxiety, fear or even anger. Some of them may feel loneliness and they just want to talk to someone. They may need prayers, time for meditation, and spiritual comfort. At critical times, they may also ask for a religious or spiritual leader, such as a Rabbi, Pastor, Guru or Imam to visit them and help in some religious rituals or sacraments. Different belief systems have diversified methods and have their own specific spiritual tools to offer to the unwell or the dying and also to their aggrieved families.

Interacting with a dying person and his or her family members may be the most difficult spiritual care demand. The cause that brings patients to a hospital could be a sudden attack of a fatal disease, or a prolonged sickness, or an accident. Here sometimes the religious beliefs play an important role. Some religions provide belief in a continuous spiritual life

after physical death. Some believe in reincarnation in other forms of life. Yet, there is always a desire to prolong this earthly human life as much as possible. In hospitals, death may come to persons of all ages – elderly men and women, young children and even newly born babies. Death could be quick and painless, or it might be an excruciating long-drawn agonizing experience. At times, difficult decisions have to be made by the patients or their close relatives whether or not to prolong life through artificial means – by the use of life supporting mechanical systems. Some patients have written instructions in advance, called 'living will', about their health care resolution whether or not they want their lives to be prolonged if the burden of treatment would outweigh the expected benefits. They may make a decision to give the gift of life to others by donating their organs and tissues. They may also designate some other individuals as their agents to make health care decisions for them if they become unconscious and are unable to regain consciousness. The hospital health care staff interacts with the patients and their families concerning such legal documentation; and the Spiritual Care volunteers do not involve themselves in these matters. The Spiritual Care service helps the dying persons by encouraging the presence of those who love them and whom they want to be near. Feeling of love and being loved is the most precious gift for a departing soul. ♦

Spirituality and Morality

According to the Islamic perspective, every human being has a soul. The soul is an intrinsic part of the body and the process of its birth starts at conception.

Morality and spirituality, or lack thereof, are conditions of the soul. Morality is one's relationship with others, and spirituality is one's relationship with God. While it is possible for a person to be moral without being spiritual, it is not possible for a person to be spiritual without being moral. The two are intertwined, in that a moral act undertaken to please God transforms into a spiritual act. For example, charity is a moral act but if practiced for the sake of pleasing God, it becomes a spiritual act. And so it is with other moral acts like honesty, courtesy, forgiveness, benevolence, truthfulness, steadfastness, sympathy, bravery, cleanliness, and so on. Spirituality enhances one's morality as well. History bears out that highly spiritual people, like the early Christians, preferred to be thrown to wild beasts rather than deny the truth. Hence, morality is a pre-requisite to spirituality and spirituality enhances morality.

Just as the body develops in the womb of the mother in nine months the soul also develops in the body of an individual throughout his or her lifetime. The embryo acquires all the organs and senses it will need to enjoy its life on earth to the fullest; similarly the soul develops, with the help of the body, the senses it will require to enjoy life here, as well as in the hereafter, to the fullest. This could be understood by imagining how the life of an individual is impacted if he or she fails to develop the faculty of sight, or hearing, while still in the womb of the mother. Similarly, if the soul of a person does not attain the various faculties of perception during the life of an individual, then it would enter the hereafter like a blind and dumb person. These faculties of perception are attained by the soul with the help of the body. The spiritual condition of a person, or the state of the soul, can only be altered and developed with bodily action. Every action committed by the body has a corresponding effect on the soul. Good moral actions will impact the soul positively, and evil actions will harm one's own soul. The relationship between the body and the soul can be understood by reflecting on the effect of bodily actions on one's inner condition. For example, haughty posture will induce pride and arrogance, humble posture will induce



Spirituality: An Islamic Perspective

By Shazia Sohail

humility; this is why soldiers in an army always march briskly, with stiff postures, to attain alertness, courage, and punctuality. Food, physical health and cleanliness also have a huge impact on the spiritual condition, or the soul, of a person. Eating, exercising and bathing become moral acts undertaken to enhance one's spirituality when performed within the boundaries set by God, for the express purpose of pleasing God.

When does the Need for Spirituality Arise?

Why does one need to be Spiritual? Why should one have any concern or regard for the metaphysical? The answer that most readily comes to mind is that it appears to be a human need. Everywhere one looks one finds people searching for the meaning and purpose of life by trying to follow someone they think has already found it. It appears that most humans are not content with the idea that they exist to live their lives out to the best of their abilities, with no higher purpose. We

Why does one need to be Spiritual? Why should one have any concern or regard for the metaphysical? The answer that most readily comes to mind is that it appears to be a human need.

seem to gain strength and the will to live and move forward, only when something inside us is energized by a sense of purpose, our spirit is ignited and we are enlivened. "Jesus saved me" is the story of numerous Christians who had given up on life, but came back with renewed vigor and faith after having found God. The common refrain among such stories is that of survival. If they had not found God, they would have died.

When everything, even life, seems meaningless, or is threatened, the instinct to survive comes forth and enables one to recognize God. The Holy Qur'an states:

"He it is Who enables you to journey through land and sea until, when you are on board the ships and they sail with them with a fair breeze and they rejoice in it, there overtakes them (the ships) a violent wind and the waves come on them from every side and they think they are encompassed, then they call

upon Allah, purifying their religion for Him, saying, 'If Thou deliver us from this, we will surely be of the thankful'" (10:23)

When a person's very existence is threatened, the moral quality of humility engulfs him and his spirituality comes into being. This is the birth of the spiritual state of man; the soul has recognized the existence of God for the first time. Spirituality, at this stage is till very weak and can easily vanish, as the Qur'an states, "And when waves engulf them like so many coverings, they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in faith; but when He brings them safe to land, then some of them take the right course. And none denies Our Signs save every perfidious and ungrateful person" (31:33).

The journey of a person on the spiritual path starts with humility. The Holy Qur'an charts out this journey in following words:

"Surely, success does come to the believers, Who are humble in their Prayers, And who shun all that which is vain, And who are active in paying the Zakat, And who guard their chastity And who are watchful of their trusts and their covenants, And who are strict in the observance of their Prayers" (23:2-10).

Corresponding to the six spiritual stages mentioned in these verses, the Holy Qur'an goes on to outline the six physical stages at the inception of man's creation when the seed for each one of these spiritual stages was sown in the consciousness of man. Six basic qualities develop very early on and these later become manifested as moral qualities with spiritual implications for the soul.

"Then We placed him as a drop of sperm in a safe depository; then We fashioned the *Nutfah* (zygote) into a clot; then We fashioned the clot into a shapeless lump; then We fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump; then We clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed it into another creation. So blessed be Allah, the Best of creators (23:14-15)."

First Stage: Humility in Prayer

"Then We placed him as a drop of sperm in a safe depository (ovum);" The first stage of creation of man comes into being through the fusion of the sperm and the ovum. At this stage it is extremely weak and vulnerable and

needs to be attached to something; otherwise it could simply flow out with bodily fluids. It develops the basic instinct of humility at this stage. What is instinctual at this stage will manifest as a moral quality of 'humility in prayer' later on in the life of the individual.

Second Stage:

Shun all that which is Vain

"Then We fashioned the zygote into a clot," - the zygote is attracted to the lining of the womb and implantation occurs. At this stage it resembles a 'clot' (*alaqa*) of blood. '*Alaqa*' means 'congealed blood' and also 'attachment to something else.' Now that it is relatively safe, it is ready to shed harmful fluids through the blood vessels connecting it to the womb. It develops the basic instinct to repel all that is harmful.

Third Stage: Paying the Zakat

"Then We fashioned the clot into a shapeless lump;" this stage in the growth of the embryo is referred to as 'differentiation.' Till implantation all the cells are identical in every way. The process of differentiation produces various types of cells (such as blood cells, kidney cells, and nerve cells). Simple cells are forsaken for the sake of complex cells; a miscarriage could occur due to genetic mistakes or abnormalities, but growth is impossible without this difficult step. The corresponding instinct to abandon something for the purpose of creation comes into being. The Moral manifestation of this quality is promptness in paying obligatory alms, i.e. Zakat, which has the dual meaning of purification and augmentation.

Fourth Stage: Chastity

"Then We fashioned bones out of this shapeless lump." Bones have a non-living, but very important, component of minerals and salts to them. Thus the embryo ensures its survival and gains greater solidity and strength by imposing a kind of death on a portion of fetal cells. The instinct to survive by causing something else to perish is born and it forms the seed of the moral quality of chastity, which requires curbing and killing the unwanted portion of natural urges and immoral practices. Chastity, according to the Islamic perspective, endows the soul with the strength it requires to fulfill all of God's commandments. It is the natural precursor to the fifth stage of the spiritual development of a person.



The soul of a person is impacted by the actions of the body. The condition of the soul is spirituality. Spirituality is born out of recognition of God in a time of sheer humility.

Fifth Stage: Righteousness

“Then We clothed the bones with flesh.” At this stage the cells for the skin, nervous system, brain, vertebra, muscles, and other organs start to form. The outer layer, ectoderm, provides the boundaries within which all the organs can grow. And as the organs will grow and become manifest within the sanctuary of the outer layer, the embryo itself will become manifest as a whole. The moral quality that comes into being at this stage is that of righteousness which becomes manifest as a moral and spiritual stage where a person becomes keenly mindful of all his responsibilities towards God and His creatures. In 7:27 the Qur’an refers to righteousness as the the best of ‘garments’ which that serves the purpose to clothe, to beautify, and to protect.

Sixth Stage: Soul

“Then We developed it into another creation.” At this stage the heart starts to beat, all the organs start to grow, and the embryo curves into a C shape. It is now invested with a soul by God Almighty. The spiritual stage corresponding to this physical condition is that the soul is granted ‘*Ruh-ul-Qudus*’ or Holy Spirit. The outward manifestation of this condition is strictness in the observance of prayer. This state is purely spiritual in nature; every act of the individual is prompted by love of god. The Holy Spirit is attained

through Divine Mercy only, just as it is only God who can create a soul in the embryo. The Arabic word for ‘Mercy’ is *Rehm*, which is also the Arabic for the word ‘womb.’ So, just as the embryo develops by becoming attached to the womb and is invested with a soul, similarly the soul develops by attaching itself to Divine Mercy and is invested with Holy Spirit.

Summary

The soul of a person is impacted by the actions of the body. The condition of the soul is spirituality. Spirituality is born out of recognition of God in a time of sheer humility. This is the first spiritual stage and one’s spirituality is extremely weak at this stage. If the individual does not immediately progress to the second stage of shunning all vain pursuits, he or she foregoes his or her spirituality. At the second stage one’s spirituality is still very weak and it is imperative for one to take action for it’s augmentation. So the third stage of spirituality is attained by paying the obligatory alms. One’s spirituality is still weak and can only be strengthened by the practice of chastity, which advances it to the fourth stage. The practice of chastity lends greater strength to the soul of a person than any of the moral actions undertaken in the first three stages. One is now ready to start fulfilling all the commandments of God

mentioned in the Qur’an. It is tantamount to fulfilling the oath that one took upon becoming a Muslim. When one becomes keenly conscious of fulfilling the rights of man with the express purpose of pleasing God and avoiding His displeasure, the final spiritual state of Holy Spirit is granted to one by the sheer Grace and Mercy of God. To an observer such a person will appear to be very strict in observance of his or her prayer. At this stage one has fulfilled the purpose of one’s creation as mentioned in the Qura’n: “And I have not created the Jinn and the men but that they may worship Me.” (51:57)◆

Endnotes

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Sufism & Spirituality

By Hassan Khan
Origins of *Tasawwuf* (Sufism)

Just when Abraham^{as} was about to sacrifice his first born, God intervened.

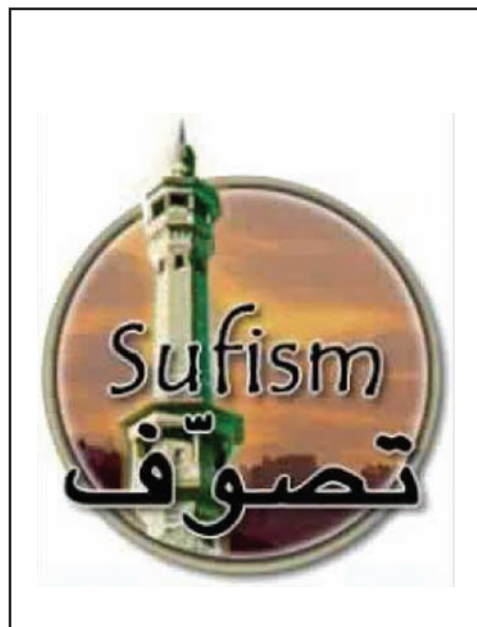
Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra}, the Second Successor to the Promised Messiah^{as}, states in “The Real Revolution” that this act took place according to a Divine plan to impress upon the people of Abraham^{as} that human sacrifice was no longer permissible. At this point in history, man had made enough intellectual progress to understand that human beings were created for a much loftier purpose than this. Explaining this point, Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra} (hereafter Hudur^{ra}) explains:

“With the growth of this concept rose the idea that man was the most superior creature in all creation, giving birth to the earliest form of *Tasawwuf* (Sufism), generally translated as *mysticism*. Man began to realize that the object of his creation was that he should win the approval of his Creator and become the beloved of Allah. *Tasawwuf* in this sense started with Abraham, though only the first foundation was laid, which later was developed to great heights.”

Man continued to make intellectual and spiritual progress after Abraham^{as}. In the time of Moses^{as}, he became mature enough to be able to follow complex divine commandments necessary for his physical, moral and spiritual development. He was therefore given a more developed law in the Torah. However, the human mind was not yet developed enough to comprehend the wisdom behind those teachings and drifted towards following the teachings in outward form only.

After a while, according to Hudur^{ra}, in the time of Jesus^{as}, “(human perception) stood ripe for another lesson in *Tasawwuf*.” In order to meet the need of the time, Jesus impressed upon his followers that the “outward form of *sharia* [sic] was intended only to establish an inner attitude of the mind, the real thing being the cleanliness and purity of heart...His mission was especially to emphasize these aspects of the teachings consolidated by a rational support of the commandments in *sharia*, *Tasawwuf* in his day reaching a state which can best be described as its adolescence.”

Over time Christians took the message of Jesus^{as} to extremes and abandoned *shari'ah*,



declaring that the Law of Moses^{as} was a curse (Galatians 3:13). This happened because the teachings of the Torah and the spirit behind the teachings were revealed to different prophets, Moses^{as} and Jesus^{as}, and at different times in history.

The ultimate and final leap in the development of *Tasawwuf* took place at the time of Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. The Holy Qur'an, unlike previous scriptures, consolidated the Divine Law and the wisdom behind its teachings into one book. Explaining this great achievement of Islam, Hudur^{ra} says, “Islamic Mysticism has come to rest on the Holy Quran itself, unlike the case of the Jews among whom the deeper and final aspects of the Mosaic teaching remained unexpounded until the need was met by the mystic movement started by Jesus Christ which came to be known as Christianity.”

Many examples can be found in the Qur'an which demonstrate that it is not merely a collection of commandments to be followed in outward form only. In fact, the Holy Qur'an stresses on the spiritual aspects of its teachings as well. Regarding prayer, for instance, it says in Surah Al-Ma'un: “So woe to those who pray, but are unmindful of their prayers, they like only to be seen of men” (107:5-7). Similarly, it says in Surah Al-Hajj: “The flesh and the blood of animals you sacrifice do not reach Allah; what reaches him from you is the spirit of righteousness” (22:38).

Traditional Sufi Beliefs and Practices

Since the advent of Islam, many Muslim saints and scholars have stressed on purely

spiritual aspects of Islam. They wrote books and gave birth to movements within Islam to oppose materialistic trends. In modern times, it is these schools of thought that have come to symbolize what is known as *Sufism*. It should be noted that Islamic civilization has produced many thinkers that have focused on different aspects of Islam, including jurisprudence, philosophy and finance. Sufism is only one aspect of religion and has a single focus on understanding and nourishing the spirituality of man to bring him nearer to God.

Followers of Sufism, or Sufis, have explained four stages of spiritual development: *shari'ah*, *tariqah*, *haqiqah* and *ma'rifah*. Mir Ghulam Ahmad Naseem, Missionary of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, explains in his book “*Tasawwuf - the Spiritual Science*” that the first stage, *shari'ah*, requires one to become firm on the Islamic moral code and the prescribed worships. The second stage, *tariqah*, is to walk the mystical path. This path is unclear and requires one to become the student of a Sufi master. Eventually, one may be blessed with a spiritual experience and will be said to have reached the third stage of *haqiqah*. The highest stage is that of *ma'rifah* which is when one discovers the Ultimate Truth. Very few people ever reach this point in their spiritual development.

There are four major Sufi sects: Qadiriyyah, Suhrawardiyyah, Chistiyyah and Naqshbandiyyah, each with its own traditions (*tariqah*) to get a Sufi to the next stage of spiritual development. Qadiriyyah was founded in Iran in 12th century CE. Qadiris repeat the names of Allah and other prayers, especially, prayers upon the Holy Prophet^{sa} (*darood*) thousands of times a day as part of their spiritual exercises. Such repetition is common to many Sufi sects and is a form of *dhikr* or *remembrance of Allah*.

Suhrawardiyyah was founded around the same time in Iran as well. Followers of this sect usually perform *dhikr* while holding their breath and also give special emphasis to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an. The Chistiyyah order was founded in Afghanistan around 10th century CE. This sect is famous for its use of devotional music. Naqshbandiyyah originated in Central Asia and emphasizes silent meditation. It forbids doing *dhikr* aloud.

Apart from establishing practices to help the spiritual development of man, Sufi scholars have also produced a lot of literature giving insight into general matters of spirituality. Many Sufis occupied themselves in intellectual debates around the nature of the universe, the soul and God. The ideas

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, held all famous Sufi personages and their contribution to Islam in great esteem. In *Kitab-ul-Bariyyah*, the Promised Messiah^{as} writes:

“Since the time of our Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, every century has seen Godly people through whom Allah showed heavenly signs to other nations for their guidance.

of *Wahdat-ul-Wujood* (Unity of Being) and *Wahdat-ul-Shuhood* (Unity of Witness) are distinctly Sufi philosophy. Such views blur the lines between the Creator and the creation, and propose that the two are inseparable in many ways.

Sufism and Ahmadiyyat

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the Promised Messiah and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, held all famous Sufi personages and their contribution to Islam in great esteem. In *Kitab-ul-Bariyyah*, the Promised Messiah^{as} writes:

“Since the time of our Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, every century has seen Godly people through whom Allah showed heavenly signs to other nations for their guidance. They were the likes of Syed ‘Abd-ul-Qadir Jilani, Abul Hassan Kharkani, Abu Yazid Bastami, Junayd Baghdadi, Muhy-ud-Din Ibn ‘Arabi, Zulnoon Misri, Moin-ud-Din Chisti Ajmeri, Qutb-ud-Din Bukhtiyar Kaki, Farid-ud-Din Pak Patni, Nizam-ud-Din Dehlvi, Shah Waliullah Dehlvi, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, may Allah be pleased with them all.”

However, in view of the Promised Messiah^{as} and his successors, modern Sufi practices and beliefs have drifted away from their original ideas. Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} writes in his book “Remembrance of Allah”: “The Promised Messiah criticized the Sufis (the so-called devotees) of his time who have introduced many innovations in Islam. He pointed out that their repeating, parrot-fashion, of different phrases of *dhikr* was useless; it was time to defend Islam from the attacks of the enemies...The Promised Messiah criticized those who verbalized the Glory of God in the privacy of their homes, but did not challenge the enemies heaping affront upon His Holy Name...This amounted to hypocrisy...Moreover, the Promised Messiah criticized them because they defaced the concept of *dhikr*... Several misguided forms of *dhikr* are found among the Sufis. They utter a cry from their hearts and take it to their heads and shout so loudly that nobody in the vicinity can sleep or concentrate on worship. This is called penetrating the heart—as if *Laa Ilaha Illa Allah* would enter their hearts only if it was hammered in!...In short, many eccentric and occult practices have been introduced into the concept of *dhikr*; none of them has anything to do with the true teachings of Islam”

The Promised Messiah has also criticized the philosophy of *Wahdat-ul-Wujood*, saying

that its proponents have erred in their understanding. However, all such criticism should not be taken to mean that the teachings of Ahmadiyyat run counter to *Tasawwuf*. In the same book, “Remembrance of Allah,” the Second Successor of the Promise Messiah^{as}, Hadrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad^{ra} explains the true relationship between Allah, the Creator, and the human beings in search of Him. The book is full of wisdom on how to nurture the relationship with Allah based on pristine Islamic teachings. This book is just one example of the commitment of the Ahmadiyya Community to the spiritual development of man, which is the aim of *Tasawwuf*. In fact, in his book “*Sair-e-Ruhani*,” Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmood Ahmad^{ra}, declares:

“The Holy Prophet^{sa} is the largest sea of the spiritual universe. Many streams flow out of him. One stream was that of sharia [sic]...then one was that of *tasawwuf*... eventually all these streams were united in the Promised Messiah.”

The Promised Messiah^{as} wrote scores of books on the subject of spirituality. One of the most famous ones that have also been translated into English is “The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam.” In it, he has expounded in great clarity the spiritual development of man, the means of attaining nearness to God and sources of Divine knowledge. Moreover, the Promised Messiah^{as} has formed a community whose members are dedicated to the spiritual well being of each other as well as the rest of the world. The community is also led by a spiritual leader, the *Khalifat-ul-Masih*, who works tirelessly to guide the community at every step. For example, the *Khalifah* points out towards the need to concentrate on prayers when they are most needed. At other times he asks for focus on financial sacrifice, or on defending the teachings of Islam from attacks by non-Muslims or putting the teachings of Islam in practice in daily lives.

In this age, therefore, the ideals, teachings and practices of *Tasawwuf* are all embodied in the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. However, as the world is being engulfed by materialism and extremism, there are many people who are turning to popular Sufism instead of Ahmadiyyat and are missing the true path towards nearness to Allah. May Allah help the message of Ahmadiyyat reach every soul in the world who wishes to be saved from the evils of our time. Ameen. ♦

FRIENDS

Abu Hurairah^{ra} relates that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: “Allah, the Exalted says: I challenge him who bears enmity towards a friend of Mine. When a servant of Mine seeks nearness to Me, with that which I love, out of whatever I have prescribed, I begin to love him and when I love him, I become his ear with which he hears and his eye with which he sees and his hand with which he grasps and his foot with which he walks, and when he begs Me for anything I bestow upon him and when he seeks shelter with Me, I give him shelter.”

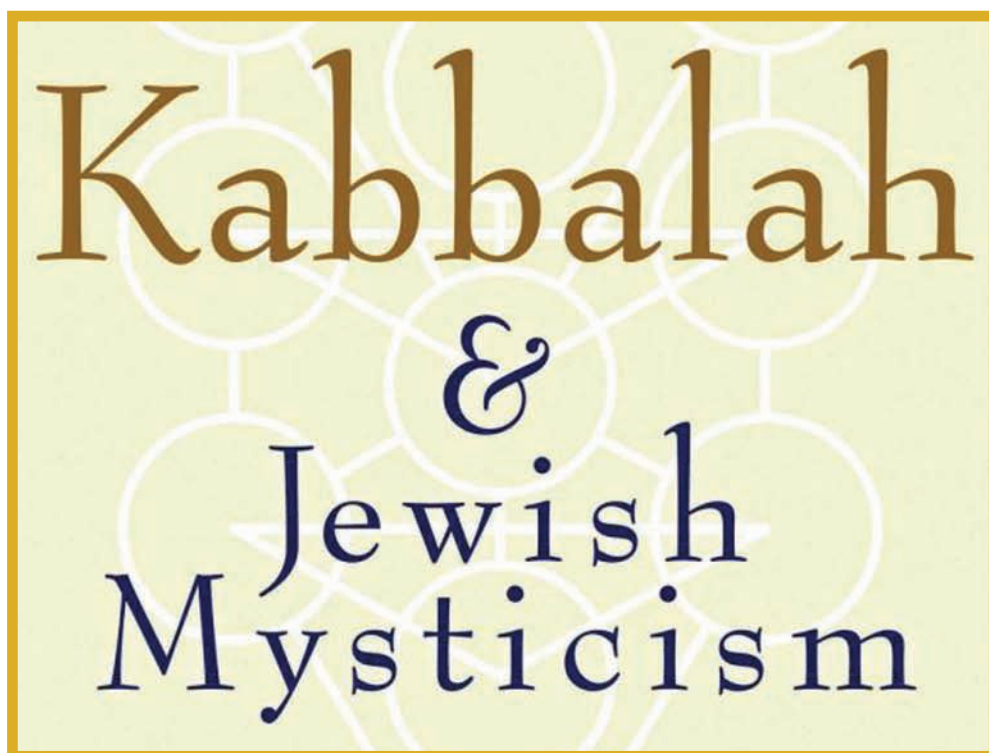
The “Sitra Ahra/Other Side” of Evil in the Sefer ha-Zohar: Satan, the Sefirot, and the Concept of the Divine in Jewish Mysticism

By Nadia Qazi

The *Zohar* remains a seminal work within the *Kabbalah*, or Jewish mysticism, centuries after its introduction to the world by Moses de Leon, who orchestrated its original appearance in Islamic Spain. Thus, it is particularly appropriate to look at that work as a representation of Jewish mystical thought. When interpreting the notions of the Divine within the *Zohar*, we will focus on the nature of God’s battle with Satan in Jewish mystical thought, especially as it is manifested through the *sefirot*. More specifically, we will look at Satan’s possible role as an executor of Divine will.

In the Book of Job within the Hebrew Bible, Satan is a member of the Divine Assembly, which is made up of those “sons of God” who are subservient to Him. Satan plays a significant role as God’s Accuser, whose role is apparently to lead humans into temptation and then report them back to God for Divine punishment. When Satan points out to God that Job is morally upright and faithful because he has never been subjected to any trials, God allows Satan to put Prophet Job^{as} through many trials in order to test his faithfulness. The Satan within the Hebrew Bible, therefore, seems to be under Divine control and acts only with God’s permission. God is ultimately responsible for Job’s^{as} suffering, as He says to Satan in the Book of Job, “You have incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.” (Job 2:3).

The *Zohar* not only expands on this theme of Satan executing the Divine Will, but also diverges from it. In the *Zohar*, Satan’s role is carved somewhat differently; while he remains the “Accuser,” the way in which he is allowed to “claim authority” is somewhat uncertain to the reader. The issue is complicated through the concept of the *sefirot*, or the aspects of the Divine personality and stages of God’s being as revealed through Jewish mystical tradition (*Kabbalah*). What is intriguing about the *sefirot* is that they are not simply attributes of God, but seem to



relate a sort of primordial Divine image, or a Primordial Adam, a paragon of our “archetypal nature.”¹ The notion of Adam’s^{as} fall from Divine grace also is important here, as Jewish mystics (*Kabbalists*) have maintained that the human race has become tainted due to Adam’s^{as} sin, which was allegedly the first sin to be committed in the world. Inherently flawed, Adam’s^{as} sin has kept the human race from being the perfect reflection of the Divine mirror, because of its ability to sin. They must therefore seek the primordial Divine image (in the form of the *sefirot*) that has its roots from before Adam’s^{as} fall.

As Genesis 1:27 states, human beings are created in the image of God. As Matt writes in his introduction to the *Zohar*, “The *sefirot* are the divine original of that image.”² The *sefirot* fuse the human identity and the Divine identity into one, which, according to Matt, “catalyzes the process of enlightenment.”³ The fusing of human and Divine suggests that the Divine is no longer *Ein Sof*, or the Infinite Reality, which is beyond comprehension. Rather, the Divine is much more intimate and

real, caught in an eternal struggle between good and evil, just as man is. While the *sefirot* may seem to have an independent existence, all of these multiple entities are actually one, and the Ultimate Reality is simply *Ein Sof*, or the Infinite. The *sefirot* are ultimate manifestations of the grand cosmic drama behind the relationship between man and Creator. The story behind the ten *sefirot* is a fascinating one, but for the purposes of this discussion, we will be focusing on the figure of *Shekinah* (Divine Presence) as well as the pair of *sefirot* known as *Hesed* (Love) and *Din* (Judgment).

The *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence) is a reflection of all aspects of God and a nurturer for all the worlds, and is also the *Keneset Yisra’el*, or the mystical community of Israel.⁴ She is the feminine aspect of God, and tries to keep the masculine aspect of God from punishing Her children, although she sometimes punishes them Herself.⁵ The *sefirot* suggest that the Divine personality is an embodiment of polar opposites, best exemplified through the pair of *sefirot* known as *Hesed* (Love) and *Din* (Judgment). These

are the two offspring of the Divine Mother (*Binah*); Love (*Hesed*) is also known as Greatness (*Gedullah*), while Judgment (*Din*) is known as Power (*Gevurah*). They become the right and left arms of God, or, as Matt puts it in his introduction to the *Zohar*, “two sides of divine personality: free-flowing love and strict judgment, grace and limitation.”⁶ If there is not a balance between Love (*Hesed*) and Judgment (*Din*), Judgment (*Din*) takes over and “threatens to destroy life.”⁷ This is known as the “origin of evil” or *Sitra Ahra*, the “Other Side.”

Matt, in his introduction to the *Zohar*, explains the notion of the “Other Side” a bit further:

“From a more radical perspective, evil originates in divine thought, which eliminates waste before emanating the good. **The demonic is rooted in the divine.**”⁸

It is this idea of evil originating from Divine thought that is incredibly fascinating. It suggests that evil has a tendency to push out any good in the world of the *Zohar*. Good is not strictly a positive force in the *Zohar*, as it has some negative aspects within it. It’s almost as if in this battle between good and evil, evil has a slight edge. Goodness might appear in the land, but only after it struggles with the forces of evil.

Only after evil has been expelled from the land that good can flourish, but evil appears to be stronger than good within the *Zohar*. After a period of decline, evil again takes root, as it does with the wicked generations of Enosh, the Flood, and the tower of Babel.⁹ The Divine itself seems to not be a pure, positive force in the world, but to be an embodiment of the multiple attributes of the *sefirot*, in particular the Feminine (*Shekhinah*) and the dual manifestations of *Hesed* (Love) and *Din*

be ever inclined towards mercy or forgiveness, but towards correction and punishment. In this, He seems to be more aligned with Satan, who certainly shuns Love (*Hesed*).

Satan’s role in executing the Divine Punishment and the ability of God Himself to punish and cause pain is explored in the section entitled, “An Offering to God.” We read,

“Anyone who rejoices on the festivals and does not give the Blessed Holy One His portion, that stingy one with the evil eye, Satan, Archenemy, appears and **accuses** him, and removes him from the world. Oh, how much trouble and suffering he brings upon him!”¹⁰

In the Pritzker edition of the *Zohar*, Matt, in his commentary, describes the role of Satan in “removing” a person from the world (as in the lines on p. 69 of Matt’s translation of the *Zohar*, which state, “Satan, Archenemy, appears, accuses him, and removes him from the world!”)¹¹ in this way:

“Satan and the Angel of Death are two manifestations of *Sitra Ahra*, ‘the Other Side,’ the demonic. See BT *Bava Batra* 16a: ‘Resh Lakish said, ‘Satan, the evil impulse, and the Angel of Death are one and the same’...See the description of Satan’s in *Bava Batra*, loc. cit.: ‘He descends and seduces, ascends and arouses wrath, **obtains authorization**, and seizes the soul.’”¹¹

The fact that the *Zohar* considers Satan and the Angel of Death to be both manifestations of the demonic is absolutely fascinating. The Angel of Death, as an executor of the Divine Will in causing death, must also be in submission to the Divine, and therefore, should be a holy being. Yet, there is this demonic element within the Divine that is manifested on the *Sitra Ahra*, or the “Other Side” of that which is holy or good. This demonic element is Satan, who “obtains authorization” to seize the soul, causing death, and punishing the soul in the hereafter for transgressing Divine laws. Satan is obtaining authorization from none other than God Himself, a God Whom, as we have learned from the *sefirot*, inclines much more towards *Din* (Judgment) than

Hesed (Love). The fact that God leans towards *Din* (Judgment) means that He also does not shy away from the punishment that inevitably arises from judging man. In the world of the *Zohar*, God’s dominant aspect is *not* Love. This is highly significant.

Still, in the final analysis, it is quite clear that *both* Love (*Hesed*) and Judgment (*Din*) are part of the Divine, as they are the two arms of God, according to the interpretation of the *sefirot*. There are multiple aspects of the Deity, which are embodied within the *sefirot*. There is no singular aspect of either God or Satan. God in the *Zohar* embodies both the nurturing Feminine aspect (*Shekhinah*) as well as the Male aspect, the *Tif’eret*, or the Blessed Holy One. When mankind sins and defiles *Shekhinah*, or the vulnerable, feminine aspect of God, Satan “claims authority” to punish those who transgress Divine law. Soon, God’s *Din* (Judgment) lashes out and threatens to destroy life, and Divine punishment comes. If *Din* (Judgment) is not tempered with *Hesed* (Love), evil, also known as the *Sitra Ahra* or the “Other Side,” originates in Divine thought, which “eliminates waste before emanating the good” (Matt, p. 36).

Yet all is not bleak. The fact that there exists both Feminine (*Shekhinah*) and Masculine (*Tif’eret*) aspects of God in the *Zohar*, and that it is enjoined that Judgment (*Din*) always be softened by Love (*Hesed*), means that within the Divine, the Feminine nurturer (*Shekhinah*) will fight for her children, and for their right to Divine Love (*Hesed*). Thus, the mystical community of Israel, as the limbs of *Shekhinah*, is given a fighting chance. Their fight for Divine Love (*Hesed*) is *Shekhinah*’s fight too, for, if Her Children sin, she, as the Feminine aspect of the Divine, will also suffer. In this struggle between the forces of good and evil, Satan, the *sefirot*, and the Ultimate Reality or the Divine are all players in a grand cosmic drama that, according to the rules of the *Kabbalah*, will continue to be enacted until the end of time. ♦

Endnotes

¹ *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Classics of Western Spirituality). Translation and Introduction by Daniel C. Matt. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983; p. 34.

² *Ibid*; p. 34.

³ *Ibid*; p. 34.

⁴ *Ibid*; p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid*; p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid*; p. 36.

⁷ Matt, Daniel Chanan. From the Introduction of the *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment*. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983.

⁸ *Zohar: The Book of Enlightenment* (Classics of Western Spirituality). Translation and Introduction by Daniel C. Matt. Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983; p. 36, emphasis added.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 51.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 69, emphasis added.

¹¹ *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition, Vol. I*. Translation and commentary by Daniel C. Matt. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004; p. 71, emphasis added.

Only after evil has been expelled from the land that good can flourish, but evil appears to be stronger than good within the Zohar.

(Judgment). With *Hesed* (Love) being the right arm of God, and *Din* (Judgment) being His left arm, the Jewish mystics (*Kabbalists*) have ascertained that God has a tendency to lean slightly towards the left, towards *Din* (Judgment). God in the *Zohar* seems not to

The Prophets of God as Spiritual Teachers

By Humera Malik

Throughout time, God has been sending messengers to all parts of the world for the spiritual guidance of mankind. Through their instructions, these messengers have served as teachers, and through their actions, as role models. At various times they have brought various teachings, suited to the current state of man. As man matured, the prophets and their messages evolved, until, once the human mind had attained its full development, God sent the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} as an exemplar for all mankind.¹

Through a discussion of a handful of God's prophets and their teachings, this article will illustrate how prophets are spiritual teachers; it will also review the evolution of their teachings over time.

Part I: Prophets as Spiritual Teachers

The lessons that prophets teach their followers are vast and valuable. However, for the purposes of this article we are only concerned with examining their teachings from the lens of spirituality; specifically, how do their teachings help their followers get closer to God.

Of the myriad ways that prophets help their followers increase in their spirituality, we will now examine three centrally important ways, using a different prophet's example for each. These three ways are: correcting false beliefs about God; leading by example; and *tarbiyyat* (moral training) of their followers.

Prophets Correct False Beliefs

One of the primary roles of a teacher is to correct their students' mistakes. When we think back to our mathematics exercise books and story writing lessons, many of us will



remember countless red marks where the teacher had corrected our sums, spellings or grammar.

If prophets are spiritual leaders, their subject matter can be considered to be God. If their followers, or students, have misconceptions about who God is, they will most certainly fail. In this way, the foremost role of a spiritual teacher is to ensure that His students fully understand their subject matter.

The people to whom Prophet Abraham^{as} was sent most certainly needed a teacher's guidance in recognizing their true God. They were steeped in various forms of idol-worship, including worship of the stars and the sun. One of their chief gods was the 'God of the Morning and the Spring Sun,' and they had filled the House of God with 360 idols.² Prophet Abraham^{as}, however,

from an early age, had abhorred idol-worship and once he was appointed by God to stamp this practice out of society, he devoted himself fully to the task, even questioning his own family members about their practices. To correct his people's beliefs, Abraham^{as} engaged in public and private debates on the subject, and when these proved futile, he went to the House of God and smashed all but one of their idols. When the people saw what had happened, they called Abraham^{as} and asked him if he was responsible. Abraham^{as} responded, 'The chief idol remains; if he is so powerful, why don't you ask him to speak and tell you what happened?' At this the people shamefully hung their heads, for they realized that an inanimate clay object held no power.

In order to become closer to someone, we must first get to know them better—their identity, their persona, their traits, and so on. When we hope to increase our spirituality, we must get closer to God, and this is not possible if we do not fully understand Him. Prophet Abraham^{as} helped his people to recognize the true God by correcting their mistakes, and thus create a greater relationship with Him. Slowly, his people began to accept the true beliefs about God, and thereby abandoned their false notions and immoral practices.

Prophets Lead by Example

When people are asked, who has inspired and shaped you the most, we often hear them mention the name of a previous teacher. It is not enough for a teacher to demand respect from students if they themselves don't demonstrate it. Illustrating through their own person what they expect to see in their pupils proves to the latter that the teacher is genuine, and that his teachings indeed manifest the rewards that are promised.

Further, without a teacher, it is impossible to put into practice certain of God's teachings. (For example, the Holy Qur'an instructs Muslims to worship God, but it was the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} who showed us how, through his example.)

David^{as} was a chosen prophet of God who was also a king with many followers. He was informed by God, 'Follow not vain desire, lest it should lead thee astray from the way of Allah' (Qur'an 38:27). As a result of his wealth, many luxuries were at his disposal. However, David^{as} chose to set an example for his followers. In order to strengthen his relationship with God, by obeying His command not to follow vain desires, David^{as} chose to fast every other day.

We have all heard the age-old saying *actions speak louder than words*, and this is certainly the case for teachers. Students need a role model to look up to and David^{as} proved to be a role model to his followers. He showed them that even though he could eat whatever his heart desired, it was more important to him to ever heighten his spirituality by obeying Gods commandments.

To this day, pious Muslims observe the ‘Fast of David,’ which saintly men throughout time have said helps to reduce one’s lust, and other base desires, leaving one free to commune with one’s Maker (see, for example, *Ihya Ulum-ud-Din* by Imam Ghazali). Denying oneself food for Allah’s sake is rewarded, as per the Holy Qur’an, with Allah Himself as the reward. David^{as} lived a life much simpler than his means, and this example inspired his followers to do the same, not allowing materialism to distract them from the Way of God.

Prophets Train their Followers

A tree, Jesus^{as} son of Mary taught, is judged by the fruit it produces. Consequently, a teacher is judged by the change they bring about in their students. As a teacher, a prophet must help his followers attain high spiritual heights.

At the advent of Jesus^{as}, for example, the Jews were under the rule of the Romans. They had misinterpreted the prophecy of receiving the kingdom through the advent of the Messiah to be a worldly kingdom. Consequently, they expected the Messiah to be a man who wielded military might, and who would free the Jews from the clutches of the Romans, and grant them sovereignty over the land.

Jesus^{as} being the true Messiah, taught that the kingdom was spiritual in nature, not worldly. Those who understood and accepted this teaching undertook a process of self-reformation and spiritual advancement. They purified their souls by correcting their beliefs and following the example of Jesus^{as} in terms of his service and worship to man. In doing so, they gave up materialism (the desire for the worldly kingdom) and became truly spiritual beings—and for whom God’s promise for the kingdom was fulfilled in its entirety.

Jesus^{as} not only taught his followers what the true kingdom was, but he also taught them how to purify their souls. He would train his general followership, but in particular his closest disciples, to send out his message and continue the work when he was no longer present among them. In this way, Jesus^{as} proved to be a strong spiritual leader as he

made provisions for the spiritual teaching of others.

These, then, are three ways in which prophets serve as spiritual teachers: correcting beliefs about God, personifying the beliefs through their own actions, and cultivating their followers to become teachers themselves.

Part II: Evolution of Spiritual Teachings

We began this article by stating that as humans evolved, so did the spiritual teachings of prophets. To truly understand the evolutionary process of prophets as spiritual leaders, let us compare their teachings on the same subject side-by-side. For the purposes of this article, we will compare the teachings of Prophets Moses^{as}, Jesus^{as} and Muhammad^{sa} with regard to punishment.

Moses^{as} taught his followers an eye for an eye, while Jesus^{as} taught his followers to turn the other cheek. Moses’s^{as} teaching was appropriate for his people at the time—a time when the life of an Israelite slave was valued less than an Egyptian’s. Moses^{as} taught them that their hand was worth just as much as anyone else’s. Further, it was a more barbaric time, where today’s ‘rule of law’—i.e. a civil penal code—was unfeasible. Some may say it was a harsh teaching, but the people were capable of respecting nothing less.

By the time of Jesus^{as}, the people had become very hard; thus, Jesus^{as} taught an extremely peaceful approach to punishment. The people’s hearts had hardened, and they no longer knew mercy—mercy that the Israelite slave was so desperate for in the time of Moses.^{as}

If one were to apply the teaching of Moses^{as} in *this* age, we would find the world engulfed in vengeance and mutual enmity, unable to forgive many wrongs. If we were to apply the teaching of Jesus^{as} to this time, we would find evildoers emboldened by the failure of the wronged to punish them.

The most complete form of punishment was taught by the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. His teaching can be boiled down to the adage, let the punishment fit the crime. Punishments for serious crimes should be harsh, to serve as deterrents (and indeed we see much lower rates of robbery in Islamic countries, for example, for which the Qur’an prescribes the cutting off of the hand). However, if one were to have a family member killed, he offered their survivors the option of receiving blood money, so that the killing ended there—rather than Moses’ teaching of a life-for-a-life. Going

a step further, Muhammad^{sa} also taught, forgiveness is best:

‘And the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof; but whoso forgives and *his act* brings about reformation, his reward is with Allah. Surely, He loves not the wrongdoers.’ (Qur’an 42:41)

In this way, Islam teaches a nuanced approach to punishment. The hardened criminal is dealt with harshly, which is the only way he responds, and in a way that deters others from taking the path of crime. And the one who commits mistakes can be forgiven; and grateful for the forgiveness, he becomes penitent and reforms himself. Muhammad’s^{sa} teaching is thus complete, and came at a time when man was ready to implement it; indeed it could not have come earlier.

In contrast, we see today that Christian nations completely ignore the teachings of Jesus^{as}. This proves that his teaching was imperfect and confined to a particular people (‘the lost sheep of of the House of Israel’) and only for a specific period of time. Christian nations are guilty of waging more war and bloodshed in the history of mankind than all other nations combined. They certainly do not turn the other cheek.

Great Leaders Breed Great Followers

Whereas Jews and Christians deny even the possibility of revelation in this age, following the way of Muhammad^{sa} with complete sincerity can lead a person to become a *muhaddath* or *mulhim* (one to whom Allah speaks or reveals), or greater yet, a Prophet. Indeed Muhammad^{sa} prophesied—as does the Holy Qur’an—that a man from among his people, through perfect followership of his teachings, would attain Prophethood. He called this person ‘Imam Mahdi,’ ‘Promised Messiah’ and ‘Jesus Son of Mary.’ This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of none other than Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. He revived the teachings of Islam in an age of materialism and helped man to return to worshipping and knowing his Creator, and thus proved to be an invaluable spiritual teacher, as a reflection of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

Those seeking a path of spirituality in this age should look to the teachings of Islam and Ahmadiyyat. ♦

Endnotes

¹*Hadhrat Muhammad^{sa} in the Vedas* by Muhammad Umar² “Prophets of God” by Daud A. Hanif (*Muslim Sunrise*, 2003)

Christian Theology and the Nature of Jesus

Zia H Shah MD

Christianity is sandwiched between Judaism and Islam and three-fourths of the Christian Bible is the Old Testament, so it is but natural to understand the Christian theology in light of both, especially Judaism, which precedes it.

In the three great monotheistic religions, Islam, Unitarian Christianity and Judaism, God is viewed as a supreme, transcendent being, beyond matter space and time, and yet the foundation of all that meets our senses that is described in terms of matter, space, and time. That is the Al Batin, the Hidden or the Transcendent God of monotheism. Furthermore, this God is not the god of Deism, who created the world and then left it alone, or the god of pantheism, who is equated with all of existence. The Transcendent God is a nanosecond-by-nanosecond participant in each event

that takes place in every cubic nanometer of the universe. He has full knowledge of all things. God listens to every thought

and participates in each action of His very special creation, a minute bit of organized matter called humanity that moves around on the surface of a tiny pebble in a vast universe.

This is the Jewish, the Unitarian Christian and the Islamic theology in a nutshell. It can be encapsulated in a simple yet elegant line of the Muslim creed, "There is no god but God (Allah)!" In contrast, the Trinitarian concept of God or nature of Jesus is an unending debate, extending over centuries, which I will document in this article, only until the time of Emperor Heraclius, who personally received a letter from the Prophet Muhammad.^{sa}

The debate about the very nature of God still rages in Christianity even in the 21st century. To engage my Christian readers, let me suggest in the words of Sir Francis Bacon's advice, "Read not to contradict ... but to weigh and consider."

The Holy Qur'an beautifully draws the character of the Prophet Solomon^{as}, his Deism along with his devotion to the Personal God

of his forefathers:

"And We (Allah) bestowed on David, Solomon who was an excellent servant. He was always turning to Us. When there were brought before him at eventide steeds of noblest breed and swift of foot, He said, 'I love the love of horses because of the remembrance of my Lord.' So great was his love of them that when they were hidden behind the veil, he said, 'Bring them back to me.' Then he began to pass his hand over their legs and their necks." (Al Qur'an 38:31-34)

Prophet Solomon^{as} sees the Personal God of his forefathers, Abraham^{as}, Ishmael^{as} and Isaac^{as} through His beautiful creation, more specifically through horses that he loves.

His father David^{as} sings the praises of the Creator God in Psalm after Psalm and the Psalm 72 is attributed to Solomon^{as}, in which he offers prayer after prayer to the Personal God of Jewish tradition, without knowing an iota about Jesus^{as}, for he preceded him by at least seven centuries:

*"Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.*

*May the mountains bring prosperity to the
people,*

the hills the fruit of righteousness.

*May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.*

*May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.*

*May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.*

*In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no
more.*

*May he rule from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.*

*May the desert tribes bow before him
and his enemies lick the dust.*

*May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
bring tribute to him."*

*(Psalm 72 [of Solomon]: 1-10,
New International Version)*

By the time we travel from the seventh century BC to the 20th century, in 2700 years, the Personal God of King Solomon^{as} and King

The Trinitarian Controversy

The Trinitarian concept of God or nature of Jesus is an unending debate, extending over centuries, which I will document in this article, only until the time of Emperor Heraclius, who personally received a letter from the Prophet Muhammad.^{sa}

David^{as}, changed for the many at least in the Jewish tradition, who would be referred to as reformed Jews, to the Deist God of Spinoza, the Founding Fathers of USA and Albert Einstein, which I will describe in a few words by three short quotes from Einstein:

"That deeply emotional conviction of the

presence of superior reasoning power, which is revealed in the incomprehensible universe, forms my idea of God.”

“That humble attitude of mind toward the grandeur of reason incarnate in existence, which in its profoundest depths, is inaccessible to man.”

“A belief bound up with deep feeling in a superior mind that reveals itself in the world of experience, represents my conception of God.”¹

This article is not to suggest that the Trinitarian Christians are any less spiritual than the Jews, the Unitarian Christians or the Muslims. It is only meant to communicate the reality that their theology cannot be appreciated without learning about their emphasis on Trinity, Divinity of Jesus^{as}, Eucharist and their obsession with the person of the Jesus^{as} of Nazareth. These are certainly large issues and cannot be covered in the expanse of one article.

Here I will briefly touch on Trinity and then focus on the nature of Jesus^{as}, his contemporaneous alleged Divinity and manhood.

Most well read and insightful Christian theologians agree that there is no mention of Trinity in the Old Testament or by the Jewish Prophets, Abraham^{as}, Isaac^{as}, Ishmael^{as}, Joseph^{as}, Moses^{as}, Aaron^{as}, David^{as} and Solomon^{as}, for a time span covering 2000 years.

Prof. William Lane Craig is one of the leading Trinitarian Christian apologists and it is useful for the Unitarians to have his confession, which I have paraphrased a little, to keep it short: “If we Examine Trinity, through the lens of the Old Testament, it is not Believable!”

In a debate, referenced here, Rabbi Tovia Singer makes a good point about absence of Trinity in the Old Testament, and Prof. William Lane Craig has no genuine answer as to why God confused and did not give the complete picture of Divinity to the Jewish prophets for 2000 years before Jesus, may peace be on him. However, William Lane Craig, an expert and an articulate debater that he is, weaves a verbose response of confusing and not defined terms, to keep those who are indoctrinated into the Triune understanding bewildered! But, he confesses the fact that the term Trinity is not mentioned even once in the New Testament.

For 2,000 years before Jesus^{as}, the Jews never thought of Trinity, as in Craig’s own words there was no reason to, going by the



Prof. William Lane Craig is one of the leading Trinitarian Christian apologists and it is useful for the Unitarians to have his confession, which I have paraphrased a little, to keep it short: “If we Examine Trinity, through the lens of the Old Testament, it is not Believable!”

Old Testament. So, how can Trinity be legitimate if none of the Old Testament Prophets preached it? Mind you, the Old Testament makes 75% of the Bible and the New Testament mount to nothing if it is not preceded by the Old Testament and that was the reason, why the Christian Fathers included it in the canon of the Bible. To listen to the debate, please go to the link provided.²

Suffice here to say that Trinity has been referred to as the self-inflicted wound of Christianity. The Trinitarian Christians take Jesus^{as} to be God and that is the monkey wrench, thrown in the Jewish theology by St. Paul, and we have beginning of a new religion called Christianity.

Making a man into a God was a feat that could not be accomplished easily, in one generation or even in one century. It required coercion by the Catholic Church and several Ecumenical Councils spread over several

centuries. So, join me on a historic journey as we collect different snapshots to understand, how Jesus^{as}, a man, a Jewish Prophet, son of Mother Mary, becomes fully divine while remaining a perfect man.

From Judaism of the first century, let us catapult to the seventh century and meet the Roman Emperor Heraclius (575 – 641 CE). Encyclopedia Britannica states about him:

Heraclius entered Dastagird with its stupendous treasure. Khosrow was overthrown by his son, with whom Heraclius made peace, demanding only the return of the Cross, the captives, and conquered Roman territory. Returning to Constantinople in triumph, he was hailed as a Moses, an Alexander, a Scipio. In 630 he personally restored the Cross to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.³

Heraclius was long remembered favorably in the Western church for his reputed feat in recovering the True Cross, which had been captured by the Persians.

However, the recovery of the eastern areas of the Roman Empire from the Persians once again raised the problem of religious unity centering around the understanding of the true nature of Christ. Most of the inhabitants of these provinces were Monophysites, believing that Jesus had a single “nature” which was either divine or a synthesis of divine and human. They rejected the Council of Chalcedon, which defined the nature of Jesus, at least, for the Roman Catholics.

To know about the Council of Chalcedon, we have to travel back, by about 150 years and visit modern day Istanbul. Let Encyclopedia Britannica do the talking again:

“Council of Chalcedon, the fourth ecumenical council of the Christian Church, held in Chalcedon (modern Kadiköy (Istanbul), Tur.) in 451. Convoked by the emperor Marcian, it was attended by about 520 bishops or their representatives and was the largest and best-documented of the early councils. It approved the creed of Nicaea (325), the creed of Constantinople (381; subsequently known as the Nicene Creed), two letters of Cyril against Nestorius, which insisted on the unity of divine and human persons in Christ, and the Tome of Pope Leo I confirming two distinct natures in Christ and rejecting the Monophysite doctrine that Christ had only one nature. The council then explained these doctrines in its own confession of faith.”⁴

In other words, the Council repudiated the notion of a single nature in Christ, and defined

that he has two natures in one person; it also insisted on the completeness of his two natures: Godhead and manhood. Jesus was perfect man and fully divine, like something may be an apple and an elephant at the same time? Humans and God are different things, but the paradoxical Christian affirmation is called a mystery because you cannot logically explain how Jesus can be both things at once.

Heraclius tried to promote a compromise doctrine called Monothelitism, to bridge the gap between Monophysites and the Council of Chalcedon.

Monothelitism is a particular teaching about how the divine and human relate in the person of Jesus^{as}, known as a Christological doctrine, that formally emerged in Armenia and Syria in 629. Specifically, Monothelitism is the view that Jesus Christ has two natures but only one will. This is contrary to the Christology that Jesus Christ has two wills (human and divine) corresponding to his two natures (Dyothelitism), as if he is a case of multiple personalities. But, nevertheless, Dyothelitism became the 'received wisdom' in Christian theology, in centuries after Heraclius.

Heraclius' philosophy was rejected, in due course of time, as heretical by both sides of the dispute. For this reason, despite his wonderful victories, Heraclius was viewed as a heretic and bad ruler by some later religious writers. After the Monophysite provinces were finally lost to the Muslims, Monothelitism rather lost its raison d'être and was eventually abandoned.⁵

Early Christianity came in numerous additional flavors. Let me mention two more here.

There was Marcion, the son of the bishop of Sinope. He was a contemporary of Tertullian, a Church father, who was to coin the term Trinity. Marcion rejected the deity described in the Jewish Scriptures as inferior or subjugated to the God proclaimed in the Christian gospel. This dual-god notion allowed Marcion to reconcile supposed contradictions between Old Covenant theology and the Gospel message proclaimed by Jesus.⁶

Then there was docetism. It is the doctrine according to which the phenomenon of Christ, his historical and bodily existence, and thus above all the human form of Jesus, was altogether mere semblance without any true reality. Broadly it is taken as the belief that Jesus only seemed to be human,

and that his physical body was a phantasm. The word docetai (illusionists) referring to early groups who denied Jesus' humanity, first occurred in a letter by Bishop Serapion of Antioch (197-203), who discovered the doctrine in the Gospel of Peter, during a pastoral visit to a Christian community using it in Rhodus, and later condemned it as a forgery. Docetism was unequivocally rejected at the First Council of Nicaea in 325 and is regarded as heretical by the Catholic Church, Orthodox Church, and many others.⁷

For additional details about early Christianities let me suggest a book by Prof. Bart Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew*.

Epilogue

The spirituality of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is about the influence of the Personal God in our world and human history. He is omnipotent and omnipresent.

At the time of the battle of Badr, a year or so after the Prophet's migration to Medina from Mecca, as an unarmed army of Muslims of 313, faced a well-armed Meccan army of a thousand strong, no secular person would have gambled for the Muslims. As the battle started, the Prophet took a handful of pebbles and threw it towards the enemy and lo and behold, shortly, a sandstorm began to blow in the eyes of the Meccans. A miracle indeed! The Qur'an describes it as, "And thou threwest not when thou didst throw, but it was Allah Who threw." (Al Qur'an 8:18)

The Muslims did not take the expression too literally. For them, Muhammad^{sa} always remained a man, a very special man, a man who received the final Scripture of Almighty God, the Holy Qur'an, a man who was to deliver to humanity the perfect and the literal word of Allah, the All Knowing. The Qur'an says:

"Say, 'I am only a man like yourselves; but I have received the revelation that your God is only One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord do good deeds, and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord.'" (Al Quran 18:111)

The early Muslims did not over play their hand, even though some would in centuries to come, so for all practical purposes, Muhammad^{sa} remained a man, a messenger of God, seal of the Prophets, the greatest of the sons of Adam, but never God.

But, on the other hand St. Paul and his group, who would later be known as proto-orthodox group over played their hand and Jesus^{as} became God and son of God at the same time, co-eternal with God the Father, while being a son, another of the Christian mysteries, which the Church dare not explain. Mother Mary became Mother of God, another dilemma, which will continue to haunt Christian theology in our age of information and curiosity.⁸

This is perhaps the very reason, why the Christians in the West are increasingly becoming unaffiliated with Christianity and the younger generations, the so called Generation X and Generation Y, as many as a third have adopted agnosticism or atheism.⁹

Interestingly, those who remain in the Trinitarian Christian camp, when they have to imagine Transcendent God, they resort to the Jewish and the Islamic concept of God, as it is not possible to imagine a hybrid, a man-god or a god-man. It is logically not possible to imagine divine flesh that Jesus^{as} was allegedly made of, according to the Christian dogma.

No one has seen 'divine flesh,' and no one can imagine a human, who is human yet divine, as we conceive of humans as those who have 46 chromosomes, with flesh, blood and bones and God is God the Father of Christian tradition, who is Transcendent Sublime and Imperceptible. You just cannot imagine them together in the same thought.

Is it time for the Trinitarian Christians to begin to acknowledge the Jewish, the Unitarian Christian and the Muslim concept of God, which they already use by imitation?

Until the Christians do so in large numbers, I will settle for the consolation, "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!" ♦

Endnotes

¹<http://islamforwest.org/2012/01/12/albert-einsteins-search-for-god-2/>

²<http://www.themuslimtimes.org/2012/11/uncategorized/william-lane-craigs-confession-if-we-examine-trinity-through-the-lens-of-the-old-testament-it-is-not-believable#ixzz2IqeURpZN>

³ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/262495/Heraclius>

⁴ <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/104580/Council-of-Chalcedon>

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monothelitism>

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcion_of_Sinope

⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Docetism>

⁸ <http://islam4jesus.org/2012/01/01/maria-pope-benedict-xvi-on-the-mother-1qnnhcumbuy-302/>

⁹ <http://www.themuslimtimes.org/2013/01/uncategorized/can-president-obama-swear-in-on-a-bible-if-half-of-it-is-forged>



Abu Hurairah related that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: “Alms giving never reduces wealth and the person who forgives other people’s faults is never disgraced. On the contrary God increases the honors of such a man and exalts him who adopts humbleness for the sake of God.”



Anas related that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: “When a sinner sincerely repents of his sins and determines to do good, God is more pleased with him than a traveler is pleased at finding his conveyance in a trackless desert after it has been lost.”



It is related that the Holy Prophet^{sa} said: “ Do not say, ‘We will do good to those who do good to us and we will oppress those who oppress us.’ But determine to do good to those who do not do good to you and oppress not those who oppress you.”

Questions & Answers

How does the first creation of the soul take place?

It is absolutely true that the soul is a fine light which is developed inside the body and is nurtured in the womb. To begin with it is hidden and imperceptible and later it is made manifest. From the very beginning its essence is present in the sperm. It is related to the sperm in a mysterious manner by the design and command and will of God. It is a bright and illuminated quality of the sperm. It cannot be said that it is a part of the sperm as matter is part of matter, nor can it be said that it comes from outside or falls upon the earth and gets mixed with the matter of the sperm. It is latent in the sperm as fire is latent in the flint. The Word of God does not mean that the soul descend from heaven as a separate entity or falls upon the earth from the atmosphere and then by chance gets mixed with the sperm and enters the womb with it. There is no basis for such a notion. The law of nature rejects it. We observe daily that thousands of insects infect impure and stale foods and are generated in unwashed wounds. Dirty linen secretes hundreds of lice and all sorts of worms are generated inside a person's stomach. It cannot be said that all these come from outside or can be observed as descending from heaven. The truth is that the soul is developed in the body and this also proves that it is created and is not self-existent.

How does the second creation of the soul take place?

The design of the Almighty Who has created the soul from the body with His perfect power appears to be that the second birth of the soul should also take place through the body. The movements of the soul follow the

movements of the body. If the body is drawn in a particular direction the soul automatically follows it. It is, therefore, a function of the Book of God to direct itself to the natural state of man: that is why the Holy Quran pays so much attention to the reform of the natural state of man and gives directions with regard to everyone of his actions, his language, weeping, speaking, keeping silent, marrying, remaining single, walking, stopping, physical cleanliness, bathing, submitting to a discipline in health and in illness etc. It affirms that man's physical condition affects his spiritual condition deeply. I cannot undertake a detailed exposition of all those directions as time is not available for such an undertaking.

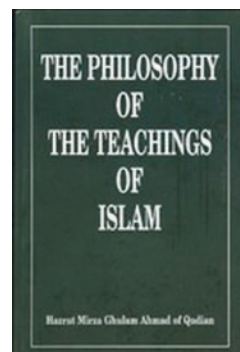
What is the impact of the soul and the body on each other?

As the soul is affected by physical conduct, in the same way sometimes the soul affects the body. For instance, when a person experiences sorrow his eyes become wet, and a person who feels happy, smiles. All our natural actions like eating, drinking, sleeping, waking, moving about, resting, bathing etc., affect our spiritual condition. Our physical structure is related intimately to our total humanity. If a certain part of the brain is injured memory is immediately lost. An injury to another part of the brain causes loss of consciousness. Poisonous air affects the body and through it the mind, and the whole inner system, to which the moral impulses are related, is impaired and the unfortunate victim passes out quickly like a madman. Thus physical injuries disclose that there is a mysterious relationship between the soul and the body which is beyond the ken of man. Reflection shows that the body is the mother of the soul. The soul does not

descend from outside into the womb of a pregnant woman. It is a light that is inherent in the sperm which begins to shine forth with the development of the embryo. The Word of God Almighty conveys to us that the soul becomes manifest from the framework that is prepared in the womb from the sperm, as is said in the Holy Quran: Then We develop it into a new creation. So blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators (23:15).

In old age a person arrives at a stage in which, after having acquired much knowledge he loses it all. (22:6) All this observation of ours is proof enough that the soul without the body amounts to nothing. This is reinforced by the thought that if the soul without the body had amounted to anything, it would have been without purpose for God Almighty to set up a relationship between it and a mortal body. Further it is worthy of note that God Almighty has created man for limitless progress. Then if the soul is not able to achieve the progress possible in this brief life without the companionship of the body. How can we expect that it would be able, by itself, without the companionship of the body, achieve limitless progress in the hereafter.

All this shows that according to Islamic principles, for the soul to act perfectly it is necessary for it to enjoy the companionship of a body at all times.



For further discussion on these topics go to Alislam.org. Search under library for the book, "The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam."

The Beauty of Islam

By Dr. M.Y. Khan

Some western writers assert that Islam was propagated by force; but nothing could be further from truth, and it only proves their narrow-mindedness and limited knowledge of Islam. A close study of Islam and the character of its founder would reveal the falsity of assertion made by the biased minds of the critics.

The word "ISLAM" means "Peace", peace with God and peace with man, and the unity of God and the Equality of man. The religion of Islam clearly condemns force in religious matters by declaring "Let there be no compulsion in Religion; now is the right way made distinct from error." Muhammad the Holy Founder of Islam practiced and preached peace throughout his life in matters religious, so much so that when he was asked to curse, he refused to do so by saying "I am mercy for all mankind." So it was not force that helped the propagation of the Muslim faith, but it was the magnetic personality and the noble character of Muhammad which won the hearts of nations.

Islam came to establish peace, justice, love and equality on earth. Muhammad brought mercy for all mankind, thus ignoring all discriminations of creed, color and nationality. He is the pioneer of true democracy, the liberator of women and the benefactor of slave. "The greatest success of Muhammad's life"

says Dr. O'Leary "had been effected by sheer moral force without a stroke of sword." Islam won the hearts of 1/5 of the human race by its universality, practicability and beauty. And the Quranic precepts are most practicable and reasonable, and this statement is confirmed by Sir William Muir, who says, "Few and simple as the positive precepts of Muhammad up to this time appear, they had wrought a marvelous and a mighty work, never, since the days when primitive Christianity startled the world from its sleep, and waged a mortal combat with heathenism, had men seen the like arousing of spiritual life, the like faith that suffered sacrifice and took joy in the cause of good for conscience's sake." "Islam means" says Thomas Carlyle, the greatest English writer, "in its way Denial of self, Annihilation of self. This is yet the highest wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our earth."

Another beauty of Islam is that it aims at universal brotherhood by declaring "There has been no people in the world but that God raised among a prophet for their guidance." It teaches its followers to be tolerant and respectful to the prophets and guides of all nations, as all of them were true messengers from God. The only way to promote peace and harmony in the world is to appreciate good in one another and respect the sentiments and the cherished beliefs of others. Disregard of differences of creed, color and nationality is pre-requisite in Islam. These noble principles are not only the written words but they are the daily practices of the believers of Islam in all parts of the world. Indeed these were the practices of Muslims which enabled them to win converts from Idol-worshippers, Heathens, Pagans, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists.

Islam has gone as far as to teach its followers to be just even to the enemy, by stating, "Let not the enmity of a people incite you to injustice. Be just, that is nearer to righteousness." What a marvelous moral. In the

presence of such unique teachings of justice and brotherhood of Islam it would be unfair not to admire and value the beauties of this Universal Faith. The religion which enjoins justice even towards the enemy, what it would not do for one's friend and neighbor?

God being the Creator and Sustainer of all worlds must satisfy all the needs of the people of all times. He has created earth, heaven, sun, moon, trees, vegetables, etc., for the physical need of the people. And when the earth needs water He sends rain. When we know that our Lord has been satisfying our material needs, just as He did for the people of the past, then how in the world can we doubt in His fulfilling our spiritual requirements. If He sent prophets and guides in the past in accordance with the needs of those people, He must send a prophet today for our need, as He is the Sustainer of all times and of all people. Common sense teaches us that we depend upon sun for our physical light; similarly we are dependent on Divine reformers and prophets for our spiritual and moral light. If He does not send any Divine reformer today that would be an impartiality on His part, because He has been blessing the people of the olden times with the spiritual guides and the messengers.

If there ever was a time of the need of the prophet, it is now. But thank goodness that He has blessed this age with Prophet AHMAD of India, the Promised Messiah. With his touch the dead are raised, the sick are cured and the blind are given eyesight. Out of his followers there are thousands today who are blessed with the Words of God and can show signs. O ye people of the West, cheer up that the Blessed One has come for whom you have been waiting for 19 centuries. The second advent of Christ is fulfilled in the person of AHMAD of India. He has come to bless nations and bring peace and prosperity on earth, therefore come and accept your Lord's message and be blessed.

My take: What would Muhammad do about U.S. pastor in Iran?

By Qasim Rashid,



When will Iran's government and clerics stop running from the truth that their religion - which they call Islam - would be unrecognizable to the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}?

On the mere allegation that American pastor Saeed Abedini evangelized Christianity, Iran threw him in front of a member of its Revolutionary Court, whom many have called a "hanging judge." Abedini now faces eight years in prison, which is nothing short of reprehensible, immoral and cowardly.

If Iran's purpose was to protect what it thinks is Islam, it has failed.

In 1902, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, courageously declared, "Religion is worth the name only so long as it is in consonance with reason. If it fails to satisfy that requisite, if it has to make up for its weakness in argument by handling the sword, it needs no other argument for its falsification. The sword it wields cuts its own throat before reaching others."

Thus, in using force to counter Abedini's alleged evangelism - an oppressive act alien to Islam - Iran's religion cuts only its own throat.

If Iran's purpose was to silence Abedini, it has failed. More people worldwide now know of him, his message of Christianity, his struggle and his passion than ever would have otherwise. Iran has given Abedini a loudspeaker that he never could have built on his own. Thus, while trying to silence Abedini's message, Iran's religion silences only

itself.

If Iran's purpose was to honor Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, it has failed. The message it has given to the world is one of intolerance and fear, characteristics alien to Mohammed's example of love and pluralism. Iran's act does more to dishonor the prophet than Abedini ever could. Thus, by cowardly, hypocritically and ignorantly demonizing Christianity, Iran's religion makes only itself look hideous.

As a practicing Muslim, I'm not sure what religion Iran practices, but it has nothing to do with the Islam that my Prophet Muhammad^{sa} taught.

And what exactly did Muhammad^{sa} teach?

My Muhammad^{sa} declared in writing to St. Catherine's Monastery at Sinai, "This is a message from Muhammad^{sa} ibn Abdullah, as a covenant to those who adopt Christianity, near and far, we are with them. Verily I, the servants, the helpers, and my followers defend them, because Christians are my citizens; and by Allah! I hold out against anything that displeases them. No compulsion is to be on them. ... The Muslims are to

fight for them. ... Their churches are to be respected. ... No one of the Muslims is to disobey this covenant until the Last Day."

My Muhammad^{sa} championed the Quranic commandment to protect all houses of worship, including churches. "Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made - because they have been wronged. ... Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is God' - And if God did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of God is oft commemorated" (22:40-41).

My Muhammad^{sa} returned to Mecca peacefully and victoriously and, citing Prophet Joseph's noble example, graciously forgave all his persecutors. While Mecca exiled Mohammed only for his faith, Muhammad^{sa} now protected the rights of all to stay in Mecca regardless of their faith. But with one condition: that freedom of conscience remain free for all people, Muslim or not.

Had Iran followed Prophet Mohammed's Islam, no such "hanging judge" would exist, no such eight-year prison sentence would exist, and no such restrictions on Abedini's peaceful preaching would exist.

So give it a rest, Iran. You've been running long enough. Your so-called religion honors neither Islam nor Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, nor will it ever silence other faiths.

Stop running, Iran, or you'll bleed yourself dry. ♦

News, Views and Reviews

Tanzania: Humanity First hands breast cancer scanner to Muhimbili Hospital

By Judica Tarimo

An international charity organization, Humanity-First, has donated breast-cancer diagnosis machines to the Muhimbili National Hospital (MNH), a major boost to the protracted battle against breast-cancer.

The assistance was extended as part of the organization's world-wide initiative to support pro-poor development endeavours, Humanity-First is a brainchild of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat, a religious fraternity with membership from many regions around the world.



The Deputy Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Dr. Seif Rashid Suleiman, received the donation at a brief handing-over ceremony held at MNH premises late in

the week.

In his remarks, the deputy minister said the donated equipment worth over USD 100,000 comes at a time when the government had stepped up strategic and focused interventions to battle breast-

cancer, a critical health problem, affecting adversely women of child bearing age and above.

“Breast cancer poses a big threat to the health and lives of many women in Tanzania, and of course, other African countries,” said the deputy minister. The government cannot tackle this problem on its own and needs the support of private sector initiatives especially charitable organizations like Humanity-First, he told the hospital staff gathering.

Suleiman appealed to capable organizations at the local level and from among the development partners, companies and all people, to get united and rally behind the government's initiatives aimed at combating breast-cancer in Tanzania.

The minister described the donation by the Humanity-First as a positive and exemplary gesture that should be emulated by other development partners.

The chairman of Humanity-First in Tanzania, Sheikh Tahir Mohmood Chaudhry asked the government to assist charity organizations in clearing donation equipment at the port.

He said on many occasions the clearing process is marred by unnecessary delays, prolonged and bureaucratic procedures. “This trend discourages good people who want to import donation equipment for the development of social welfare of our people,” the charity organizer intoned.

Responding, the deputy minister pledged to provide full support organizations intending to import donation items for health sector improvement. “The most important thing is communication. We need to communicate early so that we

(ministry) could understand the kind of support you need from us and extend it accordingly,” he declared.

Dr. Lulu Fundikira, Head of the Radiology Department at the Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS), said the mammography machine donated by Humanity First was being used for diagnosis of breast condition, especially cancer detection.

One of two experts dispatched by the government to learn best practices in the management of breast-cancer treatment unit in US said the donated equipment is used for early detection before symptoms appear, helping patients to stem the developing problem.

Speaking at the occasion, MNH Executive Director Dr Marina Njelekela, expressed profound appreciation to Humanity First, saying that the equipment would help to improve service delivery at the country's biggest hospital, and boost practicals of medical students on the other hand.

Apart from support to the health sector, Human-First also extends assistance for a wide range of sectors—including education, water, energy and social welfare, according to Chaudhry, who also doubles as Amir and Missionary in-charge of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat in Tanzania.

Humanity First is an international charitable trust established to promote and safeguard the preservation of human life and dignity. It is a non-political, non-sectarian international relief and development agency that works with the world's poorest and most vulnerable people, the country director affirmed. ♦

News, Views and Reviews

Ahmadiyya community is the real picture of Islam

Fiji Times online
By Frederica Elbourne
February, 2013

CERTAIN deeds of some Muslim groups, which are contrary to the teachings of Islam and which are committed in its name, portray Islam in a bad light.

That was the word from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Fiji on the occasion of Prophet Mohammed's Birthday on Monday.

Subsequent to the misdeeds of some Muslim believers, opponents of Islam try to find faults and means to defame the religion, national president Fazal Ullah Tariq said in his closing address at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Fiji in Samabula.

"The Muslims who carry out such misdeeds have given so much ammunition to the anti-Islamic groups that they are taking advantage of this and using the media to project Islam in the wrong light," he said.

Mr Tariq said it was unfortunate that certain so-called Islamic groups, and certain others, had portrayed Islam in such a way that the faith comprised people of uncivilised, extremist and aggressive nature.

"Just hearing the name of Islam leads to an impression of swords, bombings and suicide attacks.

"It is our claim that the Ahmadiyya community alone presents the real picture of Islam to the world today," he said.

Mr Tariq said a major allegation laid against Islam is that it was spread by the sword.

"There were very few wars for religious purposes and those that were fought were done so out of a state of necessity. And whilst the Holy Qur'an permits the use of arms to defend against the enemy, it gives reasons for this," he said.

In his closing address in Suva earlier this week, Mr Tariq said the average man on the street did not question or query what he was told, and was given to presume that the propaganda against Islam must be true.

He thanked guests at the gathering for at-

tending for reasons which included their good impression of the Muslim community.

"Your presence shows that, irrespective of differences of religion, you have come here to maintain good relations and share human values," Mr Tariq said.

Speaking about the age of fast communication and electronic media which was upon us, Mr Tariq said in the modern world, one did not have to go to too much trouble to assess the true nature, manners and conduct of any peoples.

"In other words, a secret is no longer a secret. At the very least, there is nothing hidden about the character of a people or a nation, and in fact, through very little research all becomes easily apparent," Mr Tariq said.

From a religious point of view, those who spread evil have a stronger effect than those

who incline others to goodness, he said.

"Here, the majority of people disregard this, and unfortunately, the number of such people who do not honour religion or their Creator is on the increase

"And that is why God sends His prophets and chosen people to the world, to highlight the evil ways of mankind and to draw people towards good deeds," he said.

Mr Tariq said Islam did not permit bloodshed in the name of religion or any form of extremism.

"The words and deeds of those who are rightly guided speak for themselves. They need no force to spread their faith," he said.

And the people whose hearts are not won over take their revenge when the opportunity arises and, whilst remaining within the faith, they fail to offer any sacrifices, Mr Tariq pointed out.

Lord Tariq receives Pakistan President Zardari on behalf of Queen



LONDON: **Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon** received President Asif Ali Zardari on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen when he arrived at the Heathrow Airport here on Thursday evening with his entourage on an official visit. Lord Tariq Ahmad had recently been Lord in Waiting to the Queen Elizabeth-II at The Queen's household where he performs various duties of state, including the receiving of heads of states on behalf of Her Majesty. This marks a history in itself that a Pakistani origin peer received the Pakistani president. He told Jang in an interview: "This was an honour for me to receive the president of Pakistan on my first Royal wait representing HM the Queen. I extended to President Zardari the regards of Her Majesty and we had an opportunity for a brief discussion on various matters. I conveyed to the President the good wishes and prayers of her Majesty for the progress and welfare of Pakistan. Lord Tariq is a member of **Ahmadiyya Muslim Community**.



By BONNY TAGGART

March 1, 2013 — *Special to the Muslim Sunrise with permission from The Marshall Islands Journal Online,*

Arlynn is a 13-year-old girl whose “Wotje” family, which consists of her mother and a few younger siblings, lives on the back road of Uliga. Unlike many children on Marshall island, Arlynn wants to go to school.

She dreams of college — at age 13! Arlynn attended Assumption her first few years of school, but had to leave in 2010 when her mother could not pay the tuition. Over the past few years, her mother has tried from time to time to enroll Arlynn at Rita Elementary School. But she says even paying the \$20 registration and spending \$50 for school uniforms is beyond her financial reach. In addition, she

Thanks to several adults, Arlynn Mission (left) is back in school

A Marshall Island Dream Comes True For Arlynn

said that Assumption would not release her transcripts to the public school until she paid the backtuition.

Arlynn’s mother gave up trying to get her back in school. So Arlynn spends her days at the new Mosque near her home, where there are books and computers, and other children who don’t go to school. The Ahmadiyyah Jama’at Mosque in Uliga is headed by Imam Matiullah Joyia. The word “imam” means prayer leader, like a pastor.

And in spite of experiencing not-so-subtle slights and discrimination by some people in the Marshall Islands, Mati is unperturbed in his efforts to help the most vulnerable. And the most vulnerable seem to be drawn to the peaceful safe environment they have created at their site. Any week day, you will find children of Uliga, who have never been in school, children who are “playing hooky,” and children

who want to go to school, but whose

parents cannot afford to pay the annual registration fee or buy school uniforms.

Children like Arlynn Mission. When Imam Mati learned about Arlynn’s situation when he arrived in the fall of 2012, he went to speak to the Principal at Assumption. He was told that even if he paid her tuition, she could not be re-enrolled there because she is “too far behind and they would not know where to place her.” When he tried to get her enrolled in RES, he was told that

she is too old and that they would not know where to place her. After some pressure from the Ministry on the Principal at RES, he was then told that they RES “did not have what they needed to test her” to see where to place her. Another closed door.

Hearing this story from Imam Mati, I decided to try to help. I found it hard to believe that the Ministry of Education, headed by the Honorable Senator and Minister of Education Hilda Heine

— a woman with a Ph.D. in Education



Imam Matiullah Joyia, Missionary, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Marshall Islands

— would allow circumstances to exist whereby a young girl who wants to go to school is denied. So I sent her an email requesting her intervention.

Minister Heine responded immediately. She said that she would ask the Principal at RES to test the girls for placement right away. The RES Principal insisted that none but an 18 year old had tried to enroll at her school, so Minister Heine asked me if I was sure of Arlynn's age. I assured her we had Arlynn's birth certificate in hand and that she is only 13. Realizing that we were not getting anywhere with RES, we decided to try Majuro Middle School. I asked my jera Nica Wase to go with me to avoid any cultural misunderstandings.

In mid-February, we took Arlynn to Majuro Middle School, whose Principal Anthony Aaron agreed that Arlynn should not miss another day, and readily accepted the \$20 registration fee (paid by the Imam). His secretary prepared all the paperwork, and Arlynn was directed to have her mother come that afternoon to sign all the paperwork.

As happy as I was with the outcome, I was not nearly as happy as Arlynn. She sat in front of the Principal with a big smile and tears running down her face — tears of joy! She had given up hope that she would ever be able to get back into school. Excited and happy for Arlynn, Nica and I took her straight to Momotaro Store to get her measured for uniforms. Nica paid for the fabric and Imam Mati paid the \$30 to get the uniforms made.

And just to be sure Arlynn didn't miss one more day of school, Nica stayed at Momotaro's to help make the first uniform so it would be ready by the next morning. After I dropped Arlynn back at the



Nica Wase



Principal Anthony Aaron

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the cost of education
in the RMI?***

mosque, a million questions streamed through my mind. How can you make school mandatory if at the same time you do not provide the means for children and their families to comply with this law?

Can we not provide uniforms for low-income families? Should we not eliminate any financial barriers to education? Why does it take a ri-belle and her ri-Majol best friend to get a young girl who wants to go to school enrolled? Wouldn't it make sense to require the private schools to inform the Ministry of Education when students stop attending so that they can automatically be enrolled in the public school?

What would have been the outcome for this young girl if she had not been in the right place at the right time with the right people who cared about her situation enough to take action? What about all the other children who want to be in school but are not because they have no champion, no benefactor to pay for the cost of education in the RMI?◆

Can Atheists and Muslims Support Freedom of Conscience Together?

“There shall be no compulsion in religion” (2:256)

Religion & Politics Fit For Polite Company

By Qasim Rashid
and Chris Stedman

Thomas Jefferson once wrote: “But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.”

For many of us, it’s easy to appreciate Jefferson’s eloquently stated advocacy of religious freedom of conscience, as well as the idea that all individuals should be able to express religious or nonreligious positions independent of others’ beliefs. Likewise, at the United Nations, both the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the binding International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantee “freedom of thought, conscience and religion” to all individuals. But, in spite of international agreements and Jefferson’s beautiful words, the reality is that these tenets are often forgotten.

Today, few corners of the world are immune from the oppression of conscience. Last year, Pakistan’s [Malala Yousafzai](#) captivated the world after the Taliban

viciously attacked her for promoting education for girls and women. Nearby, Pakistani Christian Rimsha Masih’s future and safety are still uncertain after she beat a blasphemy charge. In 2010, the Taliban murdered 86 Ahmadi Muslims on account of their faith. In Indonesia, Alexander Aan continues to languish in prison for the “crime” of professing his atheism, and atheist Alber Saber has been persecuted in Egypt for his lack of faith. In Iran, U.S. Pastor Saeed Abedini is serving an eight-year prison sentence for the alleged crime of preaching Christianity. And these examples are just a snapshot of what [Pew](#) reports as roughly 75 percent of the world—5.25 billion people—that live under some sort of social or governmental oppression of religious conscience.

Last year, the Center for Inquiry launched a [campaign](#) focused on promoting freedom of conscience and expression around the world—an initiative we applaud and support wholeheartedly. The Qu’ran itself champions this sentiment, emphatically declaring: “There shall be no compulsion in religion” (2:256). But in a world where oppression of conscience is inflicted on people of all different religious affiliations (or lack thereof), one

fact is clear—oppression of conscience and expression is not something that impacts only one group of people. The diversity of the players who perpetuate this oppression is as widespread as the issue itself. The solution will never come from those oppressing, but must come from those who recognize this oppression for what it is—a violation of basic human rights—and are willing to work together to fight against it.

In an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, how can we achieve freedom of conscience while embracing civility and respect in the face of vast and polarizing religious differences?

As an example, let’s look at atheists and Muslims. Or, in this case, one atheist and one Muslim. As members of minority communities in the United States, the two of us recognize that true freedom can only exist when it is rooted in mutual respect. Likewise, oppression thrives in its absence. It is crucial, however, to recognize that true civility cannot be dictated, but can only exist through personal accountability. President Truman once wrote, “Those who want the government to regulate matters of the mind and spirit are like men who are so afraid of being murdered

that they commit suicide to avoid assassination.” The only agent that can truly regulate matters of mind and spirit is the individual. Another’s religious beliefs, or lack thereof, should not threaten an individual’s sense of self.

Thus, freedom of conscience requires civility and cooperation. We coauthor this piece respectively as an atheist and a Muslim to illustrate this principle. While many people in the United States seek to inflame a so-called “clash of civilizations” between our respective communities (and others) by promoting Islamophobia and anti-atheist bias, the two of us engage in intellectual, civil, and genuine discourse—which allows

each of us to express our perspectives in a candid but respectful manner. We may never agree on some matters—and that is fine. In a world where freedom of conscience and expression are rare, agreement is not our primary concern. Recognizing another’s fundamental right to disagree while respecting his or her humanity and highest principles, however, is central to our ability to productively exchange ideas in the first place.

Civility also builds trust. By engaging in respectful discourse, we ensure two things. First, that even the most sensitive questions about the other’s beliefs can be asked—as they should be—without censorship. Thus, we do not avoid important or difficult questions out of fear of “offending” the other. Second, regardless of whether we agree on an issue, we emerge with significantly more appreciation for

one another and significantly less ignorance. In the end, that knowledge is of priceless benefit.

Even in areas of the world where freedom of conscience is upheld, an act as simple as sending a hateful email can

the eventual end of societies that chose to exchange ideas with distrust, ignorance, and vitriol—not through education, compassion, and civility.

Sending hate mail takes mere seconds. Likewise, a majority’s decision to pass

a law that oppresses its minority population can happen with little resistance. Neither of these acts requires respect or courage—only ignorance and cowardice. On the contrary, the road to ensure global freedom of conscience is not navigable without civility and courage—civility to respect others even when you disagree with them, and courage to defend the right to disagree even

when people disrespect. This is not a quick task, nor an easy one, but it is the right one.

We must actively dispel our fear of the unfamiliar and embrace our fellow human beings as equals—especially the ones with whom we might vehemently disagree. We need neither whitewash our differences, nor evangelize. And under no circumstance can we compromise an individual’s right to believe—or not believe—as she or he deems appropriate. By instead embracing the middle path of respect and moderation—even in the face of injustice and insults—we better inform each other and ourselves. Likewise, we set a practical example, one worthy of replicating, for those 5.25 billion who have known oppression of conscience.

And surely, such a strategy neither picks your pocket nor breaks your leg. ♦

COURAGE

On the contrary, the road to ensure global freedom of conscience is not navigable without civility and courage—civility to respect others even when you disagree with them, and courage to defend the right to disagree even when people disrespect.

erode the mutual respect that serves as the foundation of our freedom of conscience. Such expressions are often defended under the banner of “free speech,” but all too often we ignore the fact that freedom of conscience and such incivility ultimately cannot coexist. A society that values the freedom of conscience cannot also value ideas that support oppression—our commitment to one another requires us to stand up against dehumanizing ideologies like sexism, homophobia, racism, xenophobia, and all of the other -isms that inhibit people from living their lives freely. Given enough time, hateful words lead to hateful actions—making oppression of conscience a reality for the vast majority of the world. The aforementioned oppressive regimes did not emerge and have not strengthened because people were “too civil” with one another. Rather, they are

Obituary/Dr. Basharat Munir Mirza

By Zahir Muhammad Mannan

Death finds us all but rarely does life find one zestfully in love with the Divine who makes a lasting difference. My grandfather was that resplendent treasure. His name was Dr. Basharat Munir Mirza and he made the impossible possible! A real renaissance man whose expertise revolutionized nuclear physics, politics, theology, human beings, organizations and beyond! Zealously yet quietly serving God and others, he asked for nothing except his Lord, to Whom he belonged, and to Whom he returned to Feb. 8th.

It would be impossible to mention every impossibility my grandfather conquered. To give you only a crumb's

taste of his life here are a highlighted few: he was beckoned to the United States in 1961 to join Ohio State University as an associate professor in physics. Here he conducted pio-



neering research at Brookhaven National Lab for eleven years. Being ever-inclined to serving the fast-growing spiritual movement of the latter-day Messiah, the first thing he did was expand the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC) by establishing a new chapter in Athens, Ohio. This chapter began an unassuming newsletter which would later evolve to enlighten millions of Ahmadi Muslims across the globe as the Ahmadiyya Gazette. In 1963, he single-handedly founded America's first Muslim Printing Press called the Fazl-i-Umar Press. It has been instrumental in printing and mailing various Ahmadiyya Muslim publications for almost five decades. Through this novel asset the oldest Muslim publication in America, *The Muslim Sunrise*,

was revived after its transient death, and became America's longest running Muslim periodical. Together, Missionary Abdul Rahman Bengalee and my grandfather were chosen as Editors in 1964. Under the guidance of the holy 3rd Successor of the Awaited Messiah, my grandfather originated the Fazl-i-Umar Research Institute a year later in the same town. All Ahmadiyya Muslim publications henceforth were funded entirely by the Fazl-i-Umar Research Institute and mailed out personally by my grandfather until his demise. In 1972, he resigned from his tenure as an esteemed Professor at Ohio State University to focus solely on winning God's pleasure through His service and that of His creatures.

In 1990, he started a food pantry and ran a soup kitchen for the town of Chauncey. In 1991, he helped the Athens County Adult Education program that was about to be eliminated but miraculously kept it running. At that time, he received an honorific letter from the Ohio House of Representatives commending him as a "remarkable individual, combining civic concern and commitment with selfless initiative to become a dynamic leader." Noting his services in terms of giving of his time, energy, and resources, the letter said, "We commend you for your dedicated service to the community and salute you as one of Ohio's finest citizens." In 1994, he and his wife moved to Chauncey transforming the Old Chauncey High School into their residence. Here he turned his attention to helping the people of Chauncey. In 2007, he was elected to the town council for a four-year term. In 2008 and again in 2009, he was elected as the President of the town council for one-year terms, for two consecutive years. On March 9, 2009, he became the Mayor of Chauncey when the sitting mayor resigned becoming the first Ahmadi to become a mayor of a U.S. town. In the March 4, 2009 publication of *The Athens Messenger*, a citizen recognized my grandfather's services for the town and referred to him as one of the "Champions of Chauncey."

In his letter to the editor the citizen emphatically wrote: "Dr. Mirza, the president

of Village Council, has donated his time as well as his money many times over the years to help out the village. Even before his elected position he bought spreaders for the village dump truck to help keep the streets and roads, clean and safe. He has paid for blacktop out of his own pocket to fill and repair potholes in the village. He has ran a food bank and helped with the homeless, among other things, all with very little or no thanks or recognition." He also built what is now known as Food World in Athens, Ohio on Route 50 W. He diligently served as President of the Athens Chapter for many decades and was a Moosi which means he donated at least 1/10 of his earnings and assets to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

We feed off the intense devotion that was his inspiring life. He humbly yet passionately proclaimed, "It is not possible for a sinner like me to offer enough thanks to Allah for His bounties. He has showered this humble one with so much Grace and Mercy that they are beyond counting. I had resigned from my teaching job at Ohio University in 1972 and since 1972 I never had a job, nor did I look for one. I have spent all this time serving the Jama'at (Religious Community). Allah has been very kind and generous to me and I have never suffered. When anyone asks me about my job, my answer always has been: 'I work for Allah and He pays me very well.' In the end, I request prayers for me. May Allah make it possible for me to serve the Jama'at till my last breath" (*Al Nahl* Vol. 23 No. 2 pp. 12). We all stand witness to how God granted his supplications.

All this from a single man of materially humble origins but of a spiritually rich hailing! He was the son of Hazrat Master Mirza Nazir Hussain and grandson of Hazrat Hakeem Muhammad Hussain aka "Marham Isa" (with whom God is well pleased) two prominent disciples of his holiness the Promised Messiah and Divine Guide Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (on whom be peace). It's no wonder the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) received the Divine revelation "Mubarak Manzil" or "fortress of blessings" about the inhabitants of a house in Lahore belonging to the Miyan family. ♦

God's Ocean of Love

The man was in distress. Doctors had given him three months to live. He was getting hopeless and did not know what to do, nor how to escape the depression that he would soon depart from this world. He decided to go to the main mosque to see if he could get some help in asking God to extend his life. He was sure of one thing: All life is in the Hands of God.

It was the time of morning prayers on

this Spring day. He joined the congregation and performed his prayers. Once it was over, he saw the Imam walking towards the outside door. The man got up, caught up to the walking Imam and handed him a small note. The note just described in a few words that he was in distress and did not have long to live and needed prayers. The Imam took a look at the note for a few seconds and turned back. He went to the podium and made an announcement. He told the congregation that they have a brother who is in distress and needs our prayers so we will pray for him. The Imam raised his hands and so did the whole congregation and everyone started to pray silently. The

The Imam took a look at the note for a few seconds and turned back.

He went to the podium and made an announcement.

He told the congregation that they have a brother who is in distress and needs our prayers so we will pray for him.

man in distress also prayed along with the congregation, for his life.

The man relates that as he started to pray for himself, a feeling of comfort and contentment were going through his whole body as if the prayers were being accepted. He never experienced this before. He was getting the feeling that his distress was over. God had accepted his prayers and he would be fine. He was all done praying for himself but the Imam was still praying along with the congregation. Of course, the congregation was not going to be done until the Imam would say "Amen."

The man in distress started to watch the Imam and started to wonder why he was still praying. He did not know this Imam personally. The man was also confident of the fact that it is very hard for someone to pray for another especially when no relationship exists between the two. He was fully knowledgeable about the principle that if you want someone else to pray compassionately for you, you need to establish a relationship and a connection in order to have true affectionate feelings resulting in prayers from the heart. He never had an audience with this Imam or conversed with him. He was even sure that the Imam did not even know his name nor where he came from. Thoughts started to pound in his mind. What kind of man is this Imam? How can he have the compassion, love, and mercy for someone he does not even know? What could he be still praying for and in what words? Is he trying his best to make sure that this prayer does not go unanswered by God? The man says more time passed and he was tired by then but the Imam was still praying for him standing at the podium.

The man started to wonder about the Imam and such feelings of affection and compassion arose in his heart that he started to pray for the Imam. He was done

*The love of God
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praying for himself anyway. He started to pray that this Imam be blessed by God even more. He prayed that God elevate the spiritual status of this revered person. He prayed that the spiritual status and the standard of compassion and affection for others be continued even in his progeny. He asked God to bestow everything upon this Imam.

Finally, the Imam said *Ameen* and the prayers were finished. The man in distress was relieved and had the assurance that prayers on his behalf had been accepted. He was sure of that.

The man in distress related this story seven years later, so he obviously lived at least seven years beyond the three months his doctors gave him to live. According to his own statement, he had even discontinued his medical treatment. I do not know this man personally and I am not sure how long he lived. I know about this story because the Imam was my father and the

man published the story in a magazine after my father passed away.

It was a wonderful Spring morning when this congregation prayed for a man they did not know as the sunlight was beginning to spread. Their love was real and full of sincere affection for their fellow human beings. This is just one drop from the ocean of love that God holds for His creation. These miracles of prayers happen all over the world and have continued to happen since the creation of time.

It is remarkable to me that God would have such tremendous love for His creation. Even more remarkable is that He created love and mercy for human beings to interact with each other. The most remarkable is the fact that God made us conscious of this fact. We know and feel and are fully conscious of the fact that we can care for each other, have mercy and love for each other.

The love of God descends on earth especially when He sees us showing affection, love and mercy for each other because it is a small reflection of His love for us. When our Father in Heaven sees His children showing true love and mercy, it pleases Him and miracles take place.

Claims of love for God without the display of compassion and love for His children are meaningless.

We can experience the same as it happened on that Spring day in 1961. The congregation, the Imam and a man in distress prayed for each other with such feelings and compassion that it received the acceptance of God. A man's life was extended that day...and we received another reassuring story, another drink from God's ocean of love.

Glory be to the Lord!

Falahud Din Shams



Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque, Marshall Islands

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